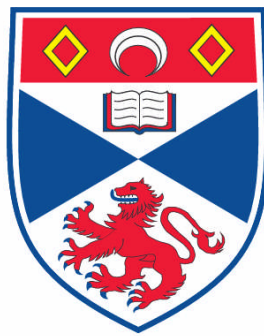


**INCOMPREHENSION OR RESISTANCE? THE MARKAN  
DISCIPLES AND THE NARRATIVE LOGIC OF MARK 4:1-8:30**

**J. Ted Blakley**

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD  
at the  
University of St. Andrews**



**2008**

**Full metadata for this item is available in the St Andrews  
Digital Research Repository  
at:**

**<https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/>**

**Please use this identifier to cite or link to this item:**

**<http://hdl.handle.net/10023/566>**

**This item is protected by original copyright**

**INCOMPREHENSION OR RESISTANCE?**  
**THE MARKAN DISCIPLES AND**  
**THE NARRATIVE LOGIC OF MARK 4:1–8:30**



**BY**  
**J. TED BLAKLEY**

A thesis submitted in completion of requirements for the degree  
*Doctor of Philosophy in New Testament*

St Mary's College,  
University of St Andrews

28 June 2008  
St Andrews, Scotland

## Declarations

- (i) I, J. Ted Blakley, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 105,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a previous degree.

Date: 23 Sept 2008      Signature of Candidate

- (ii) I was admitted as a research student in September, 2002 and as a candidate for the degree of PhD in September 2003; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2003 and 2008.

Date: 23 Sept 2008      Signature of Candidate

- (iii) I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of PhD in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

Date: 3 October 2008      Signature of Supervisor

In submitting this thesis to the University of St Andrews I understand that I am giving permission for it to be made available for use in accordance with the regulations of the University Library for the time being in force, subject to any copyright vested in the work not being affected thereby. I also understand that the title and the abstract will be published, and that a copy of the work may be made and supplied to any *bona fide* library or research worker.

Date: 23 Sept 2008      Signature of Candidate

## Copyright

In submitting this thesis to the University of St Andrews I understand that I am giving permission for it to be made available for use in accordance with the regulations of the University Library for the time being in force, subject to any copyright vested in the work not being affected thereby. I also understand that the title and the abstract will be published, and that a copy of the work may be made and supplied to any bona fide library or research worker, that my thesis will be electronically accessible for personal or research use, and that the library has the right to migrate my thesis into new electronic forms as required to ensure continued access to the thesis. I have obtained any third-party copyright permissions that may be required in order to allow such access and migration.

Date: 23 Sept 2008

Signature of Candidate

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis was six years in the making. And when you finally complete something of this magnitude, there is such an overwhelming sense of relief and gratitude that you want to take the time to show your appreciation to everyone who has been a positive and supportive influence in your life because you realize just how many people, circumstances, and serendipities have directly and indirectly conspired to deposit you at this particular place and time. The following acknowledgements and expressions of gratitude are just the tip of the iceberg.

First, I would like to thank the Episcopal parishes of The Church of Our Saviour (San Gabriel, Calif.) and St. Barnabas on the Desert (Scottsdale, Ariz.) and their rectors, Denis O'Pray and Jim Clark, whose financial support made this thesis and our life in Scotland possible. Many thanks also go to the Adult Sunday School class of Good Shepherd Episcopal Church (Wichita, Kan.), who have enthusiastically embraced me and welcomed what my scholarship has to offer and who financed my return trip to St. Andrews for my viva.

Second, I would like to thank Max Burson and the library staff of Friends University (Wichita, Kans.), my *alma mater*, for providing the resources and space that allowed me to finish my research and writing after having returned to the States. Many thanks also go to Warren Farha and the staff at Eighth Day Books ([www.eighthdaybooks.com](http://www.eighthdaybooks.com)) for creating a warm, inviting, and peaceful environment conducive to reflection and writing. Moreover, I know of no other bookstore where one can be working late on a Friday evening and have the staff pop their head around the corner and say, "We are going to close up now; just turn out the lights and pull the door to when you go."

Third, I would like to express my gratitude to the faculty at Fuller Theological Seminary (Pasadena, Calif.) for preparing me for my postgraduate studies. In particular, I offer my thanks to Fr. Samuel Gantt who always treated me as a colleague, to Marianne Meye Thompson for her ongoing support and whose referral I attribute my acceptance into the Ph.D. program, and to the most articulate person I know, James T. Butler (the *other* j.t.b.) for his wisdom, encouragement, and friendship.

Fourth, my gratitude goes out to the postgraduate community of St. Mary's College, past and present, especially to the founding members of the Hadowite Fellowship (Gary, Steve, and Daniel) for their collegiality and camaraderie. A very special thanks goes to my supervisor, Ronald A. Piper, for his keen insight, enthusiasm, and patience. I would also like to thank my examiners, Kelly R. Iverson (St. Andrews) and John Muddiman (Oxford), for a stimulating, affirming, and thoroughly enjoyable viva experience.

Finally, I wish to thank my family for their love and support, for my three sisters (Elise, Catherine, and June) and my two brothers (Ray and Ralph) who have always been proud of their little brother; for my father (Ray) who taught us the value of persistence and hard work, and for my mother (Wanda Lou) who provided us a home (I only wish she could have lived to see this; she would have been so proud.).

For my daughter Emma, who was still in the womb when the seeds of studying in Scotland were first planted on our trip to the Redwoods of northern California, and for my son Thaddaeus, who came into the world in the wee morning hours in our flat in St. Andrews, I offer my gratitude for your unconditional love and my sincerest regrets and apologies for the years of evenings when Daddy was at the office and for the weeks and months when Daddy was away from home; it really wasn't fair.

And lastly,  
I dedicate this thesis to Rebekah,  
whose sacrifices and love can never be repaid,  
though I shall endeavor to try.

Love, I thank you for everything.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>vii</b>
<b>ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS</b> .....	<b>ix</b>
 <b>CHAPTER ONE</b>	
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
PROLOGUE.....	1
SITUATING THE PRESENT READING.....	5
THE RHETORICAL FUNCTION OF MARK'S CHARACTERIZATION OF THE DISCIPLES.....	7
The Markan Disciples as Serving a Polemical Function.....	7
Theodore J. Weeden.....	7
Werner H. Kelber.....	10
Richard A. Horsley.....	13
The Markan Disciples as Serving a Pedagogical or Pastoral Function.....	16
David J. Hawkin.....	16
Robert C. Tannehill.....	18
Ernest Best.....	20
Elizabeth Struthers Malbon.....	21
MARK'S CHARACTERIZATION OF THE DISCIPLES.....	23
Mary Ann Tolbert.....	23
Jack Dean Kingsbury.....	27
Suzanne Watts Henderson.....	29
CONCLUSION.....	32
THE PLAN FOR THIS STUDY.....	34
 <b>CHAPTER TWO</b>	
<b>THE RHETORIC OF REPETITION</b> .....	<b>35</b>
NARRATIVE CRITICISM.....	35
NARRATIVE CRITICISM — BASIC PERSPECTIVES.....	36
NARRATIVE CRITICISM — KEY ELEMENTS.....	38
Narrative Structure — Story and Discourse.....	38
Narrative Communication — Authors, Texts, and Readers.....	40
The Implied Author and the Narrator.....	41
The Implied Reader — The Authorial Reader vs. The Narrative Reader.....	42
The Implied Reader as a Rereader.....	43
CONSTRUCTION GRAMMAR.....	44
SEMANTIC FRAMES AND NARRATIVE FRAMES.....	46
Semantic Frames.....	46
Narrative Frames.....	49
Conclusions.....	51
CASE FRAMES.....	52
Case Frame Analysis — The Basics.....	53
Semantic Functions.....	54
Syntactic Functions.....	55
Lexical Realization.....	55

Case Frame Analysis — Null Complements.....	56
Definite Null Complements — DNCs.....	57
Indefinite Null Complements — INCs.....	58
Case Frame Analysis — Contributions.....	59
 <b>CHAPTER THREE</b>	
<b>THE SEA CROSSING MOVEMENT, MARK 4:1–8:30.....</b>	<b>63</b>
INTRODUCTION.....	63
NARRATIVE MOVEMENT — DEFINED.....	64
Terminology Related to Narrative Movement.....	66
EXCURSUS — THE GOSPEL OF MARK IN FIVE MOVEMENTS AND TWO PARTS.....	67
MARK 4:1–8:30 AS A NARRATIVE MOVEMENT.....	68
MARK 4:1–8:30 — SITUATING MY PROPOSAL.....	68
The Status of Mark 4–8 before 1980.....	69
The Status of Mark 4–8 after 1980.....	69
Scholarly Treatments of Mark 4–8.....	71
Werner H. Kelber.....	72
Bas M. F. van Iersel.....	72
Norman R. Petersen.....	74
Elizabeth Struthers Malbon.....	75
Peter G. Bolt.....	76
Joel F. Williams.....	76
Richard A. Horsley.....	77
Whitney Taylor Shiner.....	78
M. Philip Scott.....	78
Conclusions.....	78
MARK 4:1–8:30 — MY PROPOSAL.....	79
The Internal Structure of Mark 4:35–8:21.....	80
Mark’s Underlying Geographical Framework.....	80
The Sea Crossings as the Formal Geographical Structure of Mark 4:35–8:21.....	82
The Episodic Sea Crossings in Mark 4:35–8:21 — Intrarelations.....	84
$ESC^1 \approx ESC^2 \approx ESC^3$ .....	84
$ESC^1 \approx ESC^2$ .....	85
$ESC^2 \approx ESC^3$ .....	85
$ESC^1 \approx ESC^3$ .....	86
Observations.....	86
The Episodic Sea Crossings in Mark 4:35–8:21 — Interrelations.....	88
$ESC^1$ .....	88
$ESC^2$ .....	89
$ESC^3$ .....	89
Observations.....	90
The External Boundaries of Mark 4:1–8:30.....	90
Mark 8:22–26.....	90
Mark 4:1–34.....	93
Mark 8:27–30.....	94
CONCLUSION.....	96



<b>CHAPTER FOUR</b>	
<b>THE LITERARY MOTIF</b>	<b>97</b>
THE LITERARY MOTIF — DEFINED	97
LITERARY MOTIFS IN MARK — THEIR ESTABLISHMENT	100
STAGE ONE — DEMONSTRATING THE PRESENCE OF A MOTIF	101
STAGE TWO — CONSTRUCTING THE ASSOCIATIONAL CLUSTER	101
STAGE THREE — IDENTIFYING THE PRINCIPAL CARRIERS	103
LITERARY MOTIFS IN MARK — RATIONALE FOR THE METHOD	104
 <b>CHAPTER FIVE</b>	
<b>THE SEA CROSSING MOTIF</b>	<b>107</b>
ESTABLISHING THE SEA CROSSING MOTIF	108
THE FREQUENCY AND AVOIDABILITY OF ΘΑΛΑΣΣΑ	108
The Frequency of Θάλασσα	108
The Avoidability of Θάλασσα	109
The Sea of Galilee	109
The Sea of Galilee	114
Beside the Sea	116
Special Effort	117
THE FREQUENCY AND AVOIDABILITY OF ΠΛΟΙΟΝ	119
The Frequency of Πλοῖον	119
The Avoidability of Πλοῖον	120
The Boat	121
THE ASSOCIATIONAL CLUSTER OF THE SEA CROSSING MOTIF	125
I. Inner Core	125
II. Semantic Frames	125
III. Narrative Associations	127
IV. Modifiers	127
V. Predicators	128
CARRIERS OF THE SEA CROSSING MOTIF	131
EXPLICATING THE SEA CROSSING MOTIF	133
SETTINGS AND ITINERARIES	133
The Itinerary of Werner H. Kelber	134
Kelber's Itinerary	134
Kelber's Itinerary Examined	136
The Itinerary Proposed by This Study	138
Geopolitical Space in Mark	138
Proposed Itinerary	140
Implications of the Proposed Itinerary	144
The Narrative Grammar of the Sea Crossings	144
Bethsaida	147
Bethsaida as Gentile Space	148
The Bethsaida-Gennesaret Discrepancy	151
The ESCs as Intended JGSCs	157
PRINCIPAL CARRIERS OF THE SEA CROSSING MOTIF	158
Mark 1:16–20, Fishers of People	158
Fishing for People	160
Mark 3:13–19	163
Mark 6:7–13	164

Mark 6:45–52.....	164
Conclusion.....	167
The Boat.....	168
Mark 4:35–41, Exorcism of the Wind and the Sea — ESC <sup>1</sup> .....	168
The Goal.....	169
Opposition.....	171
A Note on Spirits in Mark.....	172
The Identity of Jesus.....	174
Mark 5:1–20, Exorcism of the Gerasene Demoniac.....	176
Mark 6:45–52, Walking upon the Sea — ESC <sup>2</sup> .....	179
The Goal.....	179
Opposition.....	180
The Identity of Jesus.....	186
Walking upon the Sea.....	186
Calming the Wind.....	190
Mark 8:13–21, Discussion about The Loaves — ESC <sup>3</sup> .....	191
The Goal.....	192
Opposition.....	192
The Identity of Jesus.....	193
CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE SEA CROSSING MOTIF.....	193
THE CHARACTERIZATION OF JESUS.....	194
THE CHARACTERIZATION OF THE DISCIPLES.....	194
 <b>CHAPTER SIX</b>	
<b>THE LOAVES MOTIF.....</b>	<b>195</b>
ESTABLISHING THE LOAVES MOTIF.....	195
THE FREQUENCY AND AVOIDABILITY OF ΑΠΤΟΣ.....	195
The Frequency of ἄρτος.....	195
The Avoidability of ἄρτος.....	196
Mark 6:8.....	196
Mark 6:52.....	197
Mark 7:2, 5.....	199
The ἐσθίω-ἄρτον/Pat Construction.....	201
Mark 7:27.....	209
Mark 8:14.....	210
Prominence of “the Loaves”.....	210
Summary.....	212
THE ASSOCIATIONAL CLUSTER OF THE LOAVES MOTIF.....	212
I. Inner Core.....	212
II. Semantic Frames.....	212
III. Narrative Associations.....	214
IV. Modifiers.....	215
V. Predicators.....	216
CARRIERS OF THE LOAVES MOTIF.....	217
EXPLICATING THE LOAVES MOTIF.....	219
THE PRINCIPAL CARRIERS OF THE LOAVES MOTIF.....	219
Mark 2:23–28, The Loaves of Presentation.....	219
Mark 6:33–44, The Jewish Meal.....	222
Old Testament Echoes.....	223

The Role of Jesus.....	224
Excursus — Eucharistic Interpretations.....	227
The Role of the Disciples.....	229
The Theme of Abundance.....	231
Mark 8:1–9, The Gentile Meal.....	232
The Role of Jesus.....	234
The Theme of Abundance.....	234
The Role of the Disciples.....	235
MARK 6:45–8:21, THE TRAIL OF BREADCRUMBS.....	238
Mark 6:45–52, They Did Not Understand about the Loaves.....	238
The Referent of “the Loaves”.....	241
Mark 7:1–23, Eating the Loaves with Unclean Hands.....	244
Mark 7:24–30, The Loaf of the Children.....	247
The Exchange as Parabolic.....	249
The Exchange as Centered upon Bread.....	251
The Exchange as Ironical.....	253
The Identity of Jesus.....	255
Mark 8:4, Feeding <i>These</i> People with Loaves.....	256
Mark 8:13–21, The Discussion about the Loaves.....	260
The Harshness of Jesus’ Rebuke.....	261
Excursus — Matthew 16:5–12.....	266
“Forgetting” to Bring Loaves, Mark 8:14.....	267
“Several Loaves,” Mark 8:14, 16.....	271
The Leaven Warning, Mark 8:15.....	273
Not Understanding about the Loaves, Mark 8:16–21.....	274
Obstacle to Gentile Mission.....	279
Mark 14:12–25, This Loaf Is My Body.....	283
CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE LOAVES MOTIF.....	288
THE CHARACTERIZATION OF JESUS.....	288
THE CHARACTERIZATION OF THE DISCIPLES.....	289
 <b>CHAPTER SEVEN</b>	
<b>THE NARRATIVE LOGIC OF THE DISCIPLES’ (IN)COMPREHENSION.....</b>	<b>291</b>
THE NARRATIVE LOGIC OF THE DISCIPLES’ INCOMPREHENSION.....	292
THE SEA CROSSING MOVEMENT.....	292
Mark 4:1–6:44, Prelude to Resistance.....	292
Mark 6:45–8:21, Cycle of Resistance.....	293
Mark 6:45–52.....	293
Mark 7:1–23.....	294
Mark 7:24–30.....	294
Mark 8:1–9.....	295
Mark 8:13–21.....	296
Conclusion.....	296
THE NARRATIVE LOGIC OF THE DISCIPLES’ COMPREHENSION.....	297
SIGNS OF UNDERSTANDING.....	298
Mark 8:22a, Arrival at Bethsaida.....	298
Mark 8:22b–26, Restoration of Sight.....	299
Mark 8:27–30, Recognition of Jesus’ Messianic Identity.....	300
Jesus’ Identity within the Sea Crossing Movement.....	302

Jesus' Identity and Gentiles within the Sea Crossing Movement .....	303
The Narrative Logic of the Disciples' Incomprehension .....	304
The Narrative Logic of the Disciples' Comprehension .....	308
Peter's Declaration as Non-Recognition .....	308
Peter's Declaration as Recognition .....	309
Peter's Recognition and the Blind Man from Bethsaida .....	313
Conclusion .....	315
EXCURSUS — MATTHEW ON MARK'S SEA CROSSING MOVEMENT .....	318
Matthew on Incomprehension .....	319
Matthew on Hardness of Heart .....	321
Matthew on Gentile Mission .....	322
Conclusion .....	325
CONCLUSION TO THE STUDY .....	326
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>329</b>
<b>APPENDIX A</b>	
<b>VALENCE DESCRIPTION FUNCTIONS .....</b>	<b>A-1</b>
SYNTACTIC FUNCTIONS .....	A-1
SEMANTIC FUNCTIONS .....	A-1
LEXICAL FUNCTIONS .....	A-2
<b>APPENDIX B</b>	
<b>ASSOCIATIONAL CLUSTERS .....</b>	<b>B-1</b>
TABLE 1A: THE SEA CROSSING MOTIF — DATABASE OF CANDIDATES .....	B-2
TABLE 1B: THE SEA CROSSING MOTIF — ASSOCIATIONAL CLUSTER .....	B-3
TABLE 2A: THE LOAVES MOTIF — DATABASE OF CANDIDATES .....	B-4
TABLE 2B: THE LOAVES MOTIF — ASSOCIATIONAL CLUSTER .....	B-5

## ABSTRACT

The characterization of the Markan disciples has been and continues to be the object of much scholarly reflection and speculation. For many, the Markan author's presentation of Jesus' disciples holds a key, if not *the* key, to unlocking the purpose and function of the gospel as a whole. Commentators differ as to whether the Markan disciples ultimately serve a pedagogical or polemical function, yet they are generally agreed that the disciples in Mark come off rather badly, especially when compared to their literary counterparts in Matthew, Luke, and John.

This narrative-critical study considers the characterization of the Markan disciples within the Sea Crossing movement (Mark 4:1–8:30). While commentators have, on the whole, interpreted the disciples' negative characterization in this movement in terms of lack of faith and/or incomprehension, neither of these, nor a combination of the two, fully accounts for the severity of language leveled against the disciples by the narrator (6:52) and Jesus (8:17–18). Taking as its starting point an argument by Jeffrey B. Gibson (1986) that the harshness of Jesus' rebuke in Mark 8:14–21 is occasioned not by the disciples' lack of faith or incomprehension but by their active resistance to his Gentile mission, this investigation uncovers additional examples of the disciples' resistance to Gentile mission, offering a better account of their negative portrayal within the Sea Crossing movement and helping explain many of their other failures.

In short, this study argues that *in Mark 4:1–8:26, the disciples are characterized as resistant to Jesus' Gentile mission and to their participation in that mission, the chief consequence being that they are rendered incapable of recognizing Jesus' vocational identity as Israel's Messiah* (Thesis A). This leads to a secondary thesis, namely, that *in Mark 8:27–30, Peter's recognition of Jesus' messianic identity indicates that the disciples have finally come to accept Jesus' Gentile mission and their participation in it* (Thesis B).

**Chapter One: Introduction** offers a selective review of scholarly treatments of the Markan disciples, which shows that few scholars attribute resistance, let alone purposeful resistance, to the disciples.

**Chapter Two: The Rhetoric of Repetition** introduces the methodological tools, concepts, and perspectives employed in the study. It includes a section on narrative criticism, which focuses upon the story-as-discoursed and the implied author and reader, and a section on Construction Grammar, a branch of cognitive linguistics founded by Charles Fillmore and further developed by Paul Danove, which focuses upon semantic and narrative frames and case frame analysis.

**Chapter Three: The Sea Crossing Movement, Mark 4:1–8:30** addresses the question of Markan structure and argues that Mark 4:1–8:30 comprises a single, unified, narrative movement, whose action and plot is oriented to the Sea of Galilee and whose most distinctive feature is the network of sea crossings that transport Jesus and his disciples back and forth between Jewish and Gentile geopolitical spaces.

Following William Freedman, **Chapter Four: The Literary Motif** introduces two criteria (frequency and avoidability) for determining objectively what constitutes a literary motif and provides the methodological basis and starting point for the analyses performed in chapters five and six.

**Chapter Five: The Sea Crossing Motif** establishes and then carries out a lengthy narrative analysis of the Sea Crossing motif, which is oriented around Mark's use of *θάλασσα* and *πλοῖον*, and **Chapter Six: The Loaves Motif** does the same for The Loaves motif, oriented around Mark's use of *ἄρτος*.

Finally, **Chapter Seven: The Narrative Logic of the Disciples (In)comprehension** draws together all narrative, linguistic, and exegetical insights of the previous chapters and offers a single coherent reading of the Sea Crossing movement that establishes Theses A and B.

# ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

## ABBREVIATIONS

DNC	Definite Null Complement
ESC	Episodic (or Eventful) Sea Crossing
ESC <sup>1</sup>	First Episodic Sea Crossing (Mark 4:35–41 // Matt 8:23–27)
ESC <sup>2</sup>	Second Episodic Sea Crossing (Mark 6:45–52 // Matt 14:22–33)
ESC <sup>3</sup>	Third Episodic Sea Crossing (Mark 8:13–21 // Matt 16:4b–12)
F4000	Feeding of the Four Thousand
F5000	Feeding of the Five Thousand
FSC	Full Sea Crossing
GGSC	Gentile-to-Gentile Sea Crossing
GJSC	Gentile-to-Jewish Sea Crossing
INC	Indefinite Null Complement
JGSC	Jewish-to-Gentile Sea Crossing
JJSC	Jewish-to-Jewish Sea Crossing
M1	Movement 1, Mark 1:9–3:35
M2	Movement 2, Mark 4:1–8:30 (a.k.a., Sea Crossing Movement)
M3	Movement 3, Mark 8:27–10:52 (a.k.a., The Way Movement)
M4	Movement 4, Mark 11:1–13:37
M5	Movement 5, Mark 14:1–15:47
PSC	Partial Sea Crossing
SC	Sea Crossing
USC	Unepisodic (or Uneventful) Sea Crossing
V.D.	Valence Description

## SYMBOLS

//	separates parallel passages in biblical literature
×	indicates the number of times a word or phrase occurs





## CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION



### PROLOGUE

This study engages in a narrative reading of the Sea Crossing movement in the Gospel of Mark (i.e., Mark 4:1–8:30) in an attempt to uncover the narrative logic underlying the disciples' incomprehension of Jesus' messianic identity. In this movement, the problem, or mystery, of Jesus' identity is of central concern and the occasion for much of the movement's dramatic irony; for what the reader knows from the very beginning (1:1), the disciples are at pains to understand. But why? The disciples are granted the mystery of the kingdom of God (4:11), yet are unable to correctly identify the one who has called and commissioned them, the one whom they have left everything to follow. Their inexplicable incomprehension finds explicit expression in the first sea crossing when they fearfully exclaim, "Who then is this?" (4:41). This unanswered question remains so throughout the movement, lurking behind everything that transpires, only receiving an adequate answer in the movement's concluding scene wherein Peter declares Jesus to be the Christ (8:29). Paradoxically, Peter's sudden insight is as inexplicable as the disciples' persistent blindness, which has increased and intensified throughout the movement, reaching a climax in the final sea crossing (8:13–21). Thus, through this study, I endeavor to expose and explicate the nature of the disciples' incomprehension in the Sea Crossing movement and to account for Peter's unexpected comprehension soon thereafter.

This study, however, is not the one initially envisioned. My original project dealt with the relationship between the healing of the blind man in 8:22–26 and the confession of the centurion in 15:39, which has some bearing on the present study.

My central thesis was to have been that Mark exhibits a bipartite structure, wherein each major part concludes with a climactic declaration of Jesus' identity (8:29; 15:39) and that the two-touch healing of the blind man anticipates these two confessions. Commentators who interpret the two-stage healing symbolically have generally understood Peter's messianic confession as partial sight, associating it with the restored yet blurred vision of the blind man following Jesus' first attempt. Yet almost inevitably, these same commentators highlight the fact that Peter and the other disciples never exhibit full sight concluding that it must be a post-narrative phenomenon. Guelich is therefore representative when he writes, "Jesus will restore their sight completely, as the reader knows, after Easter."<sup>1</sup> In contrast, I had intended to show that, for Mark, the second touch that brings about full sight regarding Jesus' identity is the crucifixion itself, for the centurion's recognition of Jesus as the Son of God results from his seeing the way in which Jesus died. In other words, the two-touch miracle does not symbolize the stages in the development of the disciples' understanding, as most have assumed, but the stages through which the identity and vocation of Jesus is disclosed in the Markan narrative—a subtle, but important, distinction.

Of course, interpreters have considered it significant that the only human character in Mark to identify Jesus as God's Son is a Gentile. Yet, one question that warrants further exploration is whether anything is to be made of the fact that this particular Gentile is also a centurion, that is, a Gentile in a position of authority for Mark seems to be of two minds about Gentiles. Jesus teaches, heals, and feeds Gentiles and so appears to be favorably disposed toward them in general, yet at the same time Jesus exhibits a less than favorable attitude regarding Gentile rulers (10:42). If, then, a distinction is to be made in Mark between Gentiles generally and Gentiles in authority, how might this contribute to our understanding of the centurion's confession and its significance?

In pursuit of an answer, my first task was to identify where Gentiles occurred in Mark and the actions Jesus performed in Gentile territories. Beginning at 1:1 and working progressively forward, I found after several weeks of research that I had yet to move beyond the midpoint of the narrative. Instead I found myself focused upon chapters 4–8, trying to make sense of Jesus' itinerary as he and his disciples traveled back and forth across the Sea of Galilee. At this point, I made an interesting and po-

---

<sup>1</sup> Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26* (WBC 34a; Dallas: Word Books, 1989), xxxvii.

tentially significant discovery. As is well known, Mark records six sea crossings, three of which are episodic, that is, three in which an event is narrated during the crossing itself. The episodic sea crossings (ESCs) are 4:35–41, 6:45–52, and 8:13–21, hereafter ESC<sup>1</sup>, ESC<sup>2</sup>, and ESC<sup>3</sup> respectively. All of the sea crossings can be classified according to their points of departure and landing. In Mark, a sea crossing may embark from Jewish territory and disembark in Gentile territory, may proceed from Gentile to Jewish territory, or may both begin and end in Jewish territory. By plotting their intended itineraries, I discovered that of the six sea crossings, the three ESCs—all three ESCs and *only* the three ESCs—were ones that set out from Jewish territory and were destined for Gentile territory. That the three ESCs were *exclusively* oriented toward Gentile space seemed more than coincidental. This discovery raised the possibility that what transpires during an ESCs is integrally related to its Gentile trajectory such that a consideration of the ESCs might contribute to the question of Mark’s ambiguous view toward Gentiles. For initial support of this hypothesis, an appeal can be made to those commentators who see a relationship between Jesus’ exorcism of the wind and the sea in ESC<sup>1</sup> and his subsequent exorcism of the legion of unclean spirits from the Gerasene demoniac. But what about ESC<sup>2</sup> and ESC<sup>3</sup>?

At this point, an underappreciated argument by Jeffrey Gibson became instructive. In “The Rebuke of the Disciples in Mark 8.14–21,”<sup>2</sup> Gibson offers an explanation of the disciples’ actions and motives during the third and final ESC that attempts to account for the harshness of Jesus’ rebuke. Dissatisfied with the prevailing view that Jesus’ upbraiding of the disciples is occasioned by their lack of faith in Jesus’ ability to meet their needs, Gibson argues that the disciples are reproached because they demonstrate resistance to Jesus’ offering of salvation to those not officially recognized as belonging to Israel, in this case, Gentiles. This resistance is manifest in the disciples’ failure to bring extra loaves with them in the boat as they head back into Gentile territory. The disciples do not *absentmindedly forget* to bring extra loaves but *purposefully neglect* to do so in an attempt to prevent Jesus from performing another feeding among Gentiles. Jesus’ warning that the disciples beware the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod is then taken as an admonition against becoming party to the type of attitude and behavior characteristic of those who have displayed hostility toward Jesus and his mission. Thus, according to Gibson, Jesus’ stinging rebuke of his

---

<sup>2</sup> Jeffrey B. Gibson, “The Rebuke of the Disciples in Mark 8.14–21,” *JSNT* 27 (1986): 31–47.

disciples, which includes the charge of hardness of heart, makes more sense when understood as directed at those who are actively opposed to his mission than at those who simply lack faith and/or understanding.

Gibson's argument made two important contributions to the early stages of my research. First, given its dependence upon Jesus and his disciples' being en route to Gentile territory, Gibson's argument supported my supposition that the Gentile trajectory of an ESC informs, and perhaps is even integral to, what transpires during a crossing. Second, his argument raises the possibility that the disciples' incomprehension, so pronounced in the ESCs, is related to the problem of Gentiles in Mark *and* that positing purposeful resistance might unlock that relationship. As far as I know, Gibson's study is the only treatment of ESC<sup>3</sup> that attributes such willful opposition to the disciples. If Gibson is correct, this would significantly impact how we are to understand the nature of the Markan disciples' incomprehension, both within and outwith 4:1–8:30, which would impinge upon historical hypotheses built upon a particular interpretation of their incomprehension. Gibson's argument, however, has received little attention and even less support in the scholarly literature.<sup>3</sup> Yet, it could be strengthened if further examples of purposeful resistance on the part of the Markan disciples were identified and strengthened even further if evidence *from within the narrative itself* could be garnered to explain why the disciples exhibit such opposition. An initial exploration of Mark with these thoughts in mind identified other potential examples of disciple resistance as well as evidence within the narrative that might clarify the nature of that resistance. These examples appeared in contexts where the disciples' incomprehension and Gentile issues were both present, and thus, a new project was conceived. This study could, therefore, be described as an attempt to revive, corroborate, and significantly extend a neglected thesis regarding the occasion and nature of Jesus' rebuke of the Markan disciples in ESC<sup>3</sup>.

---

<sup>3</sup> Beavis and Watts cite Gibson's study but do not interact with its central argument while France, Gundry, and Marshall dismiss it altogether (Mary Ann Beavis, *Mark's Audience: The Literary and Social Setting of Mark 4.11–12* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 217n43, 219n75. R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 315n18. Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 415. Christopher D. Marshall, *Faith as a Theme in Mark's Narrative* (SNTSMS 64; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 217–218n2. Rikki E. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1997), 225n14, 226n18). Only recently has a Markan commentator, Kelly R. Iverson, who published a monograph during the latter stages of my research and writing, incorporated Gibson's thesis into his reading of Mark 8:13–21 (*Gentiles in the Gospel of Mark: 'Even the Dogs Under the Table Eat the Children's Crumbs'* (LNTS 339; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 95–97).

## SITUATING THE PRESENT READING

Without a doubt, the decidedly negative portrait of the Markan disciples has captured the imagination of many a scholar, having been the subject of many a debate for over a century. This interest in the Markan disciples owes much to William Wrede's, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien*.<sup>4</sup> In his seminal work, Wrede includes within the complex of material known as the messianic secret not only instances in which Jesus explicitly enjoins silence upon his disciples but also instances in which the disciples fail to understand Jesus. Over the past forty years, there have appeared a number of studies, both major and minor, of Mark's presentation of the disciples. This interest in the Markan disciples can, in part, be attributed to the enduring influence of Wrede's thesis, despite the fact that most Markan scholars now question whether the incomprehension of the disciples properly belongs to the secrecy motif. In part, this interest in the Markan disciples can be attributed to the maturation of redaction criticism since the harsh treatment of the disciples is generally regarded as distinctively Markan and thus of critical importance for discerning Mark's theological program.<sup>5</sup> Finally, this interest owes much to the more recent emergence of narrative criticism, which began to investigate the Markan disciples first and foremost as characters within a literary work.

When reviewing the various scholarly treatments of Mark's negative characterization of the disciples, it is not uncommon for commentators to organize them under two headings: the first may be variously termed the pedagogic, parenetic, or pastoral theory and the second the polemical theory.<sup>6</sup> These two categories of explanation differ regarding how the reader is expected to relate to the Markan disciples. Are the disciples "fallible followers" and so to be regarded sympathetically, or are they "final failures" to be rejected entirely?<sup>7</sup> While at different ends of the spectrum, pedagogical and polemical theories address the same basic concern; both are attempts to describe how the negative portrayal of the Markan disciples functions rhetorically within the narrative.

---

<sup>4</sup> William Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien: zugleich ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Markusevangeliums* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901).

<sup>5</sup> William R. Telford, *Mark* (NTG; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 77.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Telford, *Mark*, 4–5; Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 54–56.

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "Narrative Criticism: How Does the Story Mean?," in *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies* (ed. Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 30.

There are, however, treatments of the Markan disciples that are not concerned with their rhetorical function. These studies are not concerned with the impact the disciples' characterization was designed to have upon the reader so much as with the disciples' characterization itself. These studies ask, "Why are the disciples uncomprehending?," whereas studies concerned with the disciples' rhetorical function ask, "Why are the disciples *characterized* as uncomprehending?" This is a subtle but significant distinction for studies governed by the first question are concerned primarily with the dimension of a narrative known as its *story* (what transpires in the story world created by the author) whereas studies governed by the second question are principally concerned with the dimension of a narrative known as its *discourse*, or rhetoric, (what transpires in the communication between the implied author and the implied reader).<sup>8</sup>

Now while story and discourse are distinct dimensions of a narrative, it would be a mistake to regard them as detached from one another. Story and discourse should not be confused, yet neither should they be isolated from one another. Accordingly, all of the treatments of the disciples reviewed below deal with both dimensions to greater and lesser degrees. This is particularly true of those studies concerned primarily with the rhetorical function of the disciples, for it is impossible to explain the intended effect the disciples' characterization is to have upon the reader without attending to the disciples' characterization itself. That is, one cannot argue that the disciples' incomprehension is in service to a pedagogical purpose without first determining that the disciples are in fact uncomprehending. Conversely, determining that the disciples are uncomprehending cannot be done without attending to how and what the author is attempting to communicate about the disciples to the reader. Nevertheless, the treatments of the Markan disciples reviewed below generally have a principal goal, either to provide a description of the author's characterization of the disciples (and so primarily concerned with the *story*), or to theorize about the intended function of the author's characterization (and so primarily concerned with the *story-as-discoursed*). Thus, reviewees will be grouped accordingly.

The purpose of the following review is to situate my reading of the Sea Crossing movement amidst scholarly treatments of the disciples in Mark, with attention being focused upon how scholars understand and present the characterization of the

---

<sup>8</sup> These concepts are treated in Chapter 2.

disciples in Mark 4:1–8:30, whether or not they recognize 4:1–8:30 as a literary unit. The literature in this area is extensive, so the review is limited to studies from the last forty years or so that have made a significant impact on Markan studies as a whole and/or touch on areas close to the questions this study seeks to answer. Scholars are reviewed chronologically within each grouping, beginning with an overview of each scholar's study or thesis in order to provide a context for describing and evaluating their contributions to the following sets of questions: (1) How are the disciples characterized in Mark 4:1–8:30? What language does Mark employ, and what language do scholars employ to describe and re-present Mark's characterization of the disciples? (2) More specifically, what is the nature of the disciples' incomprehension, or negative characterization generally? Where does it occur in the narrative, and to what is it related? (3) What role or relationship do the ESCs and the Sea Crossing movement's interest in Gentiles and Gentile spaces have to do with the negative characterization of the disciples?

#### THE RHETORICAL FUNCTION OF MARK'S CHARACTERIZATION OF THE DISCIPLES

##### THE MARKAN DISCIPLES AS SERVING A POLEMICAL FUNCTION

*Theodore J. Weeden*

Taking his starting point from Johannes Schreiber<sup>9</sup> and Joseph B. Tyson,<sup>10</sup> in "The Heresy that Necessitated Mark's Gospel" and then more fully in *Mark—Traditions in*

---

<sup>9</sup> In "Die Christologie des Markusevangeliums," *ZTK* 58 (1961), Johannes Schreiber outlines a set of methodological principles for isolating Markan redaction (154–55), which Weeden adopts with some minor modifications.

<sup>10</sup> In "The Blindness of the Disciples in Mark," *JBL* 80 (1961), Joseph B. Tyson challenges the notion that the incomprehension of the Markan disciples belongs to the messianic secret motif. Wrede had argued that Jesus enjoined silence upon his disciples because they partially recognized who he was. Tyson argues, however, that Jesus silences the disciples because their partial understanding is really a complete misunderstanding. "It is not as if the disciples had discerned the nature of Jesus but are prohibited from broadcasting it, but it is that the disciples have a wrong conception about his nature" (261–62). The disciples' misunderstanding, or blindness (these terms are used interchangeably), is of two specific kinds: (1) they do not understand the necessity of Jesus' sufferings and consequently (2) they do not understand their position within the community. Thus, Mark's presentation of the blindness of the disciples is not an attempt to explain why Jesus was not recognized as the Messiah during his lifetime (so Wrede) but is an effort to discredit the disciples. Mark is engaged in a polemic directed at the Jerusalem church and its leadership—the historical disciples, Jesus' family, and their theological descendants—who understand Jesus' messiahship in royal, nationalistic terms and who accordingly have established a royal dynasty and/or occupy positions of prestige within the church. Over against such a royal, Son of David christology, Mark presents Jesus as the suffering Son of Man whose followers are to live lives of humility and service, taking up their cross and not lording it over others.

*Conflict*, Theodore J. Weeden argues that Mark's negative presentation of the disciples is not due to "the evangelist's accurate reporting of the facts," nor is it "the unfortunate by-product of the evangelist's broader theological motif (the messianic secret)," rather it "is a carefully formulated polemical device created by the evangelist to disgrace and debunk the disciples."<sup>11</sup> Weeden sees Mark's presentation of the disciples as evolving through three successive and progressively worsening stages.<sup>12</sup> In the first stage (1:16–8:27), the disciples are *imperceptive*, unable to perceive who Jesus is despite the countless deeds of power he performs. Following Peter's confession, a radical shift takes place from imperceptivity to *misconception*. In this second stage (8:27–14:9), the disciples neither understand nor accept the concept of a suffering messiah that Jesus repeatedly teaches. The final stages (14:10–72) is one of rejection; here the disciples totally reject Jesus and his messiahship as reflected in Judas' betrayal, the disciples' desertion, and Peter's denial. From this data, Weeden concludes that

Mark is assiduously involved in a vendetta against the disciples. He is intent on totally discrediting them. He paints them as obtuse, obdurate, recalcitrant men who at first are unperceptive of Jesus' messiahship, then oppose its style and character, and finally reject it. As the coup de grace, Mark closes his Gospel without rehabilitating the disciples.<sup>13</sup>

Mark's polemic is occasioned by a christological controversy and directed at a heretical group that has infiltrated the Markan community. These heretics present Jesus as a divine man (θεῖος ἀνὴρ) and themselves as divine men (θεῖοι ἄνδρες), perpetuating both a false christology and a false discipleship, neither of which have a place for suffering.<sup>14</sup> They appeal to the historical disciples for authority, which Mark combats by appealing to a higher authority, Jesus himself. Thus, the heretical position

---

<sup>11</sup> Theodore J. Weeden, "The Heresy That Necessitated Mark's Gospel," in *The Interpretation of Mark* (ed. William R. Telford; IRT 7; 1985), 64, 66; repr. from ZNW 59 (1968).

<sup>12</sup> Theodore J. Weeden, *Mark—Traditions in Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 26–51; idem, "Heresy," 64–66.

<sup>13</sup> Weeden, *Traditions*, 50–51.

<sup>14</sup> Here we can see another example of Weeden's indebtedness to Schreiber, who seems to have been the first to develop the idea that there were two competing christologies in Mark (Séan P. Kealy, *Mark's Gospel: A History of Its Interpretation* (New York: Paulist, 1982), 170). Specifically, Schreiber argued that Mark has overlaid a θεῖος ἀνὴρ-christology, inherent in the traditions he received, with a salvator-salvandus-christology (a redeemed-redeemer christology) and in so doing created the *theologia crucis* so characteristic of his gospel (Schreiber, "Christologie," 158–59).



of the opponents is represented in the narrative by the Markan disciples while the author's own orthodox position is that of the Markan Jesus.<sup>15</sup>

*Characterization in Mark 4:1–8:30.* According to Weeden, throughout the first half of Mark's gospel, the disciples are portrayed as unperceptive or imperceptive, as being unable to perceive who Jesus is. Though they enjoy a privileged position, having been called, taught, and empowered by Jesus, they exhibit far less insight into Jesus' messianic identity than do the crowds and other minor characters. Specifically, the disciples' imperceptivity is to be equated with their "inexplicable inability to recognize Jesus' miraculous power."<sup>16</sup> For example, in ESC<sup>1</sup> the disciples demonstrate a lack of faith in Jesus' ability to save them. Later, their incredulity in response to Jesus' question, "Who touched my clothes?" (5:30–31) shows that they are unaware of his power as does their bewilderment over how Jesus will feed four thousand people (8:4), despite having recently witnessed him feed five thousand people. In ESC<sup>3</sup>, their anxiety over how they are going to subsist on a single loaf of bread once again reveals their complete lack of awareness of Jesus' miraculous abilities. In addition, the disciples fail to understand the nature of Jesus' mission (1:37) and fail to comprehend his parables (4:10, 13; 7:17–18). Weeden also identifies 6:37 and 6:51–52 as examples of the disciples' imperceptivity though without ever specifying what exactly they have failed to understand.

There are a number of problems with Weeden's argument not least being that his interpretation of the Markan disciples, even if it were accepted, would not actually support his thesis, for how can the disciples serve as representatives of a θεῖος ἀνὴρ christology when, according to Weeden, they are repeatedly portrayed as failing to recognize that Jesus possesses miraculous abilities? Moreover, there are reasons not to accept Weeden's interpretation of the disciples. For example, the disciples' response to Jesus, "How can you say, 'Who touched me?'" (5:31) does not reflect their lack of awareness of Jesus' healing powers but simply expresses their confusion over Jesus' question since it is clear that crowds of people are touching him. As has already been

---

<sup>15</sup> John Dominic Crossan expands Weeden's thesis by arguing that Mark's polemic is directed not only at the original disciples but also at Jesus' relatives who occupied positions of authority within the Jerusalem church. The "Markan polemic is not only a conflict within the Markan community over doctrine but also a manifesto from the Markan church, in whole or in part, against the jurisdictional and doctrinal hegemony of the Jerusalem church" ("Mark and the Relatives of Jesus," *NovT* 15 (1973): 111).

<sup>16</sup> Weeden, *Traditions*, 27.

noted with reference to Gibson's argument, there is reason to question the view that in ESC<sup>3</sup> the disciples are worried about lacking provisions such that they cannot be said not to understand Jesus' power. Finally, there are places in the narrative where the disciples clearly recognize Jesus' ability to perform miracles. Following Jesus' first exorcism in Capernaum, the disciples inform him that Simon's mother-in-law is sick, presumably so that he will heal her. While the disciples may initially lack faith in Jesus' ability to save them during ESC<sup>1</sup>, the episode ends with their question, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (4:41), which clearly demonstrates their recognition of Jesus' miraculous abilities even as it reveals their failure to discern the implications for Jesus' messianic identity and vocation.

Another problem with Weeden's interpretation of the Markan disciples is that it relies almost exclusively upon their negative portrayal and does not consider how their positive portrayal contributes to their overall characterization in Mark. In addition, all, save one, of Weeden's examples of the purported imperceptivity of the disciples' occur within 4:1–8:30 (1:37; 4:10, 13, 38–41; 5:30–31; 6:37, 51–52; 7:17–18; 8:4, 14–21). These observations highlight the inadequacies of Weeden's study and show that his argument distorts and/or misreads the evidence and suffers from oversimplification, since at best it only applies to 4:1–8:30 and not to the entire first half of the Gospel. If Weeden had paid attention to the positive portrayal of the disciples and noted at what point in the narrative the portrayal turns decidedly negative, he would have had more to contribute regarding the nature and implications of the disciples' characterization in Mark.

Werner H. Kelber

In *The Kingdom in Mark: A New Place and a New Time*, Werner H. Kelber argues that the Gospel of Mark was written in the aftermath of the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, which had a devastating impact not only upon Jews but upon Jewish Christians whose eschatological hopes were tied to a particular place (Jerusalem) and a particular time (the first Christian generation, now past). Composed in response to this eschatological crisis of faith, Mark's narrative attempts to engender hope by demonstrating that the parousia, which ushers in the consummation of the kingdom, is to take place in Galilee (a new place) within the second Christian generation (a new time), which Jesus repeatedly taught by word and deed but which the disciples

repeatedly failed to comprehend.<sup>17</sup> Thus, in Mark's story, the disciples represent what came to be the Jerusalem church, and the theme of discipleship failure, which "[over-shadows] the total ministry of Jesus,"<sup>18</sup> serves as a polemic against a false eschatology in the author's attempt to explain how Jerusalem Christianity, with its hopes centered upon the city and its temple, had gone astray.<sup>19</sup>

Though Jesus was preparing the disciples to be the shepherds over a new flock during his absence, they remained ignorant of the nature and purpose of his mission. Specifically, the disciples failed to understand that the kingdom Jesus was forming and to which they were called to serve was to be comprised of both Jews and Gentiles and to be located in Galilee. The disciples also failed to understand the necessity of Jesus' suffering and death, and in the end abandoned Jesus to his fate. Due to the women's silence (16:8), the male disciples never received the news of Jesus' resurrection and his plan to meet them in Galilee. Consequently, they remained in Jerusalem and established a Jewish-only Christian community, which remained oriented to the temple and obedient to Jewish purity laws, despite Jesus' having announced the temple's destruction and the obsolescence of Jewish purity regulations.

*Characterization in Mark 4:1–8:30.* For Kelber, Mark's treatment of the disciples focuses upon their vocation as apostles who were chosen by Jesus and were being prepared to shepherd the new flock of the kingdom in his absence. Yet, Mark presents the twelve as persistently ignorant with respect to Jesus' mission, making them unfit to "occupy the place and fulfill the function that was destined for them."<sup>20</sup> In 4:35–8:21, which Kelber recognizes as a distinct section, the disciples' ignorance covers a host of issues, all related to Jesus' expanding of the kingdom beyond the borders of Galilee in an effort to establish the kingdom as a community comprised of both Jews and Gentiles.

---

<sup>17</sup> Werner H. Kelber, *The Kingdom in Mark: A New Place and a New Time* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 1, 129–47.

<sup>18</sup> Kelber, *Kingdom*, 144.

<sup>19</sup> This same basic thesis is operative in Kelber's other studies of the theme of discipleship failure in Mark though with slightly different emphases. "Each of Kelber's three books asserts a polemical reading of the story of the disciples and a polemical reading of the Markan context—although the foundation for the polemic is different in each case. The disciples are portrayed negatively in Mark because they represent those who, in Mark's historical context, held the 'wrong' eschatology (*Kingdom*), belonged to the 'wrong' church (*Mark's Story*), employed the 'wrong' linguistic medium (*Oral and Written*), and/or embraced the 'wrong' genre (Kelber's 1985 article)." Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "Text and Contexts: Interpreting the Disciples in Mark," *Semeia* 62 (1993): 87.

<sup>20</sup> Werner H. Kelber, *Mark's Story of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 55.

So, in ESC<sup>1</sup>, Jesus rebukes the disciples for their cowardice in the face of peril. The disciples' subsequent fear, though following Jesus' silencing of the wind and the sea, is not reverential awe in Jesus' miraculous powers but shock over his rebuke "because they cannot grasp the implications of the crossing,"<sup>21</sup> for in Mark, "fear is an expression of the disciples' condition of non-perception."<sup>22</sup> The disciples see only a nature miracle when they should have comprehended the fact that Jesus is expanding the kingdom by overcoming the barriers to Gentile mission and inclusion that the Sea of Galilee represents.

In 6:7–13, the twelve are commissioned for a Galilean mission, and so ought to be ready to function in Jesus' absence. Yet, despite the success of this mission, they fail to assume their role as shepherds when the occasion arises (6:37). "Their desire to dismiss the crowds (6:35–36) and to buy the bread (6:37c–e) suggests that they are unaware of what has transpired at the feeding,"<sup>23</sup> namely, that as apostles they are responsible for feeding the flock in Jesus' absence.

In ESC<sup>2</sup>, the disciples fail to overcome the adversities of a sea crossing destined for Gentile territory by failing to recognize the true nature of Jesus and his campaign because they did not understand about the loaves (6:52). They did not understand from their participation in the feeding of the five thousand that they were being prepared to shepherd those who were like sheep without a shepherd (6:34) when the Shepherd was taken away (14:27). Jesus' stilling of the sea and his exorcism of the Gerasene demoniac should have "opened their eyes to the inclusion of Gentiles,"<sup>24</sup> in which case they would have known that the Jewish feeding "was only in partial fulfillment of the Kingdom."<sup>25</sup> Instead, the twelve see Jesus only as a miracle worker and not as the one who secures passage to Gentiles by overcoming the barriers that separate Jews and Gentiles.

In his purity debate with scribes and Pharisees (7:1–13), Jesus removes "the legal barrier which prevented Gentiles from full participation in the Kingdom,"<sup>26</sup> yet his attempt to explain this to the disciples (7:14–23) is unsuccessful as the ongoing narrative of the disciples' failures makes clear. For example, in ESC<sup>3</sup>, the final episode

---

<sup>21</sup> Kelber, *Kingdom*, 50.

<sup>22</sup> Kelber, *Kingdom*, 49.

<sup>23</sup> Kelber, *Kingdom*, 57.

<sup>24</sup> Kelber, *Kingdom*, 58.

<sup>25</sup> Kelber, *Kingdom*, 58.

<sup>26</sup> Kelber, *Kingdom*, 59.

of this section, the disciples are so preoccupied with not having any bread that they fail to recognize the significance of the one loaf (8:14), which symbolizes the unity of the kingdom as an inclusive community of Jews and Gentiles.

Kelber's presentation of the Markan disciples has some points of contact with my own not least in his positing a connection between the Gentile trajectory of the ESCs and the disciples' negative characterization. At times, Kelber's arguments pave the way for my own conclusions and insights though we do not always arrive at the same destination. For example, Kelber gives the impression that the disciples are being sent to Gentiles in ESC<sup>2</sup>, but he never explicitly states that this is the case or even discusses the possibility. Thus, Kelber's study is suggestive but incomplete.

On the other hand, many aspects of Kelber's argument are problematic. First, Kelber often offers an explanation of the disciples' failures at odds with what actually occurs in the narrative. For example, Kelber argues that the disciples' fear in ESC<sup>1</sup> is occasioned not by Jesus' stilling of the sea but by his rebuke of their cowardice, which completely ignores the fact that their fearful response refers explicitly to the stilling of the sea and not the rebuke. Also, in the first feeding, Kelber claims that the disciples' dismissive response to Jesus' proposal that they feed the crowd "suggests that they are unaware of what has transpired at the feeding,"<sup>27</sup> which cannot be the case since this exchange occurs prior to the feeding.

Second, Kelber often confuses the story and discourse dimensions of the narrative especially regarding what he expects the disciples to know, which in many cases could arguably be expected of the implied reader but not of the disciples as characters. For example, in ESC<sup>3</sup>, to fault the disciples for not understanding that the one loaf in the boat symbolizes the unity of the kingdom, is problematic because even if the loaf functions symbolically within the narrative, it does so at the level of the story's discourse and not within the story world itself.

*Richard A. Horsley*

In *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark's Gospel*, Richard A. Horsley rails against, what he calls, the *discipleship* reading of Mark's Gospel. Rooted in Christian theology and recently reinforced by literary and social-scientific methods, the discipleship reading treats Mark primarily as a story about discipleship such that "the

---

<sup>27</sup> Kelber, *Kingdom*, 57.

disciples function in the interaction between the individual (modern) reader and the author to communicate a message of discipleship.”<sup>28</sup> In contrast, Horsley advocates a *political* reading of Mark, which takes seriously the severity of the treatment of the twelve but which sees their escalating conflict with Jesus as a subplot within a narrative focused upon the political struggle between a subjugated people and their imperial oppressors. The dominant plot presents Jesus, “as a Moses- and Elijah-like prophet leading a renewal of Israel in its village communities over against its Jerusalem and Roman rulers, who stand under God’s judgment.”<sup>29</sup> Jesus appoints twelve disciples to be representatives of a renewed Israel and commissions them to be active agents in Jesus’ mission of renewal. Yet “the twelve increasingly misunderstand what is happening, voice different values, and finally deny and abandon Jesus at his arrest and trial.”<sup>30</sup> In highlighting the persistent failures of the twelve, this subplot constitutes a critique of Peter and the other disciples based in Jerusalem who, in their roles as the acting heads of the wider Christian movement, have failed to embody Jesus’ egalitarian values and program. Thus, the twelve function polemically (a political reading) not pedagogically (a discipleship reading) within the Markan narrative.

*Characterization in Mark 4:1–8:30.* Like Weeden, Horsley sees the relationship between Jesus and his disciples as passing through three negative, progressively worsening stages;<sup>31</sup> yet unlike Weeden, Horsley begins with Mark’s positive portrait of the disciples. Initially Mark presents the disciples straightforwardly as those personally chosen by Jesus to be representatives of Israel undergoing renewal (1:16–20; 3:13–19) and then as equipped by Jesus to expand his program of renewal (6:7–13). Yet, once they have been given the secret of the kingdom, the disciples are presented as not understanding what Jesus is doing. Then, following Peter’s confession (8:29), the disciples show themselves to hold views and values at odds with those of Jesus and ultimately show themselves to be unable and unwilling to follow Jesus and the contours of his renewal program. At the close of the story, the disciples are nothing but faithless deserters who are never rehabilitated.

---

<sup>28</sup> Richard A. Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark’s Gospel* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 81.

<sup>29</sup> Richard A. Horsley, “A Response to Robert Gundry’s Review of *Hearing the Whole Story*,” *JSNT* 26 (2003): 157.

<sup>30</sup> Horsley, “Response,” 157.

<sup>31</sup> Horsley, *Hearing*, 79–81, 91–97. These stages are more implicit in Horsley.

In 4:35–8:21, Horsley sees Jesus as continuing his campaign of renewal both within and beyond the borders of Galilee, and it is in this section that the disciples begin to manifest a lack of faith in and a misunderstanding of Jesus and his kingdom program. This is demonstrable in the three ESCs where the disciples are presented as fearful and faithless (ESC<sup>1</sup>), as in a state of panic (ESC<sup>2</sup>), and as unfaithful (ESC<sup>3</sup>). Even more pronounced is the disciples' misunderstanding of the significance of Jesus' wilderness feedings (6:37, 52; 8:4, 15–21). The disciples fail to understand that

The people of Israel, who “were like sheep without a shepherd,” are now undergoing a renewal like their original formation in the exodus and wilderness under Moses' leadership, *and* the kingdom of God is now being expanded to include other peoples as well in the renewal led by the new Moses-Elijah, God's prophetic agent in miraculously multiplying food.<sup>32</sup>

Horsley's recognition that the disciples' misunderstanding begins to be manifest when God's kingdom begins to be expanded to include Gentiles is quite significant, yet Horsley fails to capitalize upon this connection because he does not take his insights regarding the role of the disciples in Jesus' mission far enough. For example, Horsley discusses at length the disciples' full and active participation in Jesus' program of renewal, noting how their instructions for mission and their Galilean mission itself present the disciples as engaged in acts of preaching, healing, and exorcising that parallel Jesus' own activities and approach. Yet, when Horsley describes the extension of the kingdom to other peoples, he does so only with reference to the activities of Jesus without ever considering the fact that the disciples are not presented as participating in this aspect of Jesus' program. Horsley goes so far as to describe the disciples as *willfully misunderstanding* the feedings<sup>33</sup> but stops short of identifying this as active resistance to Jesus' Gentile mission, though he has laid the groundwork for such an identification. Though he characterizes the disciples' misunderstanding as *willful*, he is content with suggesting that the disciples simply misunderstand that God's kingdom is to include Gentiles. Yet, as I shall argue, Horsley's descriptor and evidence points to something deeper, namely, that the disciples do understand that Jesus' program of renewal has Gentiles within its purview but are nevertheless opposed to it.

---

<sup>32</sup> Horsley, *Hearing*, 89.

<sup>33</sup> Horsley, *Hearing*, 91.

David J. Hawkin

In “The Incomprehension of the Disciples in the Marcan Redaction,” David J. Hawkin agrees with Tyson and Weeden that the motif of the disciples’ incomprehension does not belong to the messianic secret since what the disciples “fail to comprehend is other than the knowledge that Jesus is the messiah” for “midway through the gospel the disciples do recognize Jesus as such.”<sup>34</sup> Hawkin argues that within the Marcan redaction a distinction is to be made between the messianic *secret* (i.e., the secret of Jesus’ identity) and the messianic *mystery* (i.e., the mystery of his death and resurrection). As outsiders, the crowds never break through the messianic secret but the disciples, as insiders, do. The disciples “pierce the secret of Jesus’ identity, [but] they fail to grasp the mystery of his destiny.”<sup>35</sup> Mark so distinguishes the crowds and the disciples because each group serves a different rhetorical function. The crowds represent Israel, and the messianic secret (i.e., the secrecy motif) attempts to explain why Israel as a whole did not recognize Jesus as the messiah. The disciples represent the church, and the messianic mystery (i.e., the incomprehension motif) functions pedagogically. By thematizing the mystery of Jesus’ destiny via the incomprehension motif, the author “*specifies what the Church is to seek to understand.*”<sup>36</sup> The reader is not meant to identify *against* the disciples (so Tyson and Weeden) but *with* the disciples, albeit in an ironic fashion.

It is evident that Mark is not inviting his readership to repudiate the suffering of the messiah as Peter does in [8:31–33]. Just the opposite; precisely what Peter repudiates the church is called on to embrace. The mystery that the disciples fail to understand is precisely the mystery into which the church is called to enter. The incomprehension motif is to be classified as *typology per contrarium*. It sets in sharper focus what has to be grasped about the mystery of Christ. . . . The destiny of Jesus is the paradigm of Christian existence. To “comprehend” is to discover and affirm the law of the cross as the supreme eschatological reversal.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> David J. Hawkin, “The Incomprehension of the Disciples in the Marcan Redaction,” *JBL* 91 (1972): 492.

<sup>35</sup> Hawkin, “Incomprehension,” 496.

<sup>36</sup> Hawkin, “Incomprehension,” 500.

<sup>37</sup> Hawkin, “Incomprehension,” 500. Hawkin’s position is similar to the position of Ebeling who argues that the incomprehension of the disciples is a literary device designed to disclose the nature of Jesus’ messiahship to the reader. H. J. Ebeling, *Das Messiasgeheimnis und die Botschaft des Marcus-Evangelisten* (BZNW 19; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1939).



*Characterization in Mark 4:1–8:30.* Hawkin does not provide a detailed account of the characterization of the disciples but instead offers a general overview of the Markan plot, divided into four sections, each of which are unified by particular motifs and concerns. Mark 1:14–6:34 is taken up with the rejection of Jesus by his own people paralleled with his acceptance by a new people. In 6:34–8:21, the motif of the disciples' incomprehension ensues and is accompanied by another, symbolic motif related to the feeding of the five thousand. In 8:27–10:52, the disciples are gradually initiated into the messianic secret and the messianic mystery, comprehending the secret but not the mystery. Finally, 11:1–16:8 is concerned with Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem. The incomprehension motif is, therefore, a prominent feature of the middle two sections of the gospel although the nature of the incomprehension is different in each. In 8:22–10:52, the disciples fail to understand Jesus' suffering messiahship and thus the cruciform shape of true discipleship. In 6:34–8:21, the disciples do not understand Jesus' universal significance, which is exemplified in the concluding episode where the disciples fail to comprehend "that Jesus is the one loaf for Jews and Gentiles, as the feeding narratives have shown."<sup>38</sup> Like Kelber, Hawkin's symbolic interpretation of the one loaf confuses discourse with story. Nevertheless Hawkin makes a significant contribution by demonstrating that within the incomprehension motif broadly conceived the nature of the disciples' incomprehension is different before and after Peter's confession; the objects of their incomprehension are related but different.

Hawkin employs the terminology of a redaction critic, yet his approach is essentially that of a narrative critic and represents a transitional period in the late 60s and the 70s when redaction critics were beginning to engage in a more holistic, comprehensive form of redaction criticism, which both lead to and was inspired by the emergence of literary, or narrative, criticism proper.<sup>39</sup> Hawkin's focus upon movements and motifs anticipates the approach of this study; yet, despite its contributions, Hawkin's study is of limited value due to its restricted scope and lack of detailed argument.

---

<sup>38</sup> Hawkin, "Incomprehension," 495.

<sup>39</sup> Note, for example, the following comment: "Our task is to see how the relationships within the story-line (especially between Jesus and his disciples) illuminate the response which the redaction is intended to elicit from the readership" ("Incomprehension," 494).

Robert C. Tannehill

Responding to Norman Perrin's call for biblical scholars to develop a general literary criticism of the gospels,<sup>40</sup> Robert C. Tannehill offers the first thorough-going narrative-critical analysis of the Markan disciples in his often-cited study, "The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role." Against a redaction criticism focused upon editorial emendations to the received tradition, Tannehill argues that

additions and changes to source material do not in themselves reveal the concerns and emphases of the author. The question of what is emphasized in a writing is logically separate from the question of the origin of material within it.<sup>41</sup>

Instead attention must be given to the final form of the composition, to the ways in which Mark has structured his narrative and chosen to tell his story, to "the implicit dialogue between author and reader."<sup>42</sup>

In this study, Tannehill describes how the Markan author influences and guides his Christian readers' identification with the disciples. Initially, the disciples are portrayed as responding favorably to Jesus, which reinforces "the positive view of the disciples he anticipates from his readers, thus strengthening the tendency to identify with them."<sup>43</sup> Yet, as the story unfolds, the disciples' inadequacies are revealed; they are presented in conflict with Jesus on essential matters and ultimately as disastrous failures. This progressively negative portrayal of the disciples creates tension for the reader who feels the need to disassociate themselves from the disciples but cannot do so easily having initially esteemed them and identified with them. According to Tannehill, this dramatic tension is a rhetorical effect designed by the author to awaken his readers to their own failures as disciples and call them to repentance. In short, Mark has constructed his narrative "in order to speak indirectly to the reader through the disciples' story."<sup>44</sup>

*Characterization in Mark 4:1–8:30.* In Tannehill's reading, the portrayal of the disciples is essentially positive through 6:30. While a few examples of difficulty be-

---

<sup>40</sup> Norman Perrin, "The Christology of Mark: A Study in Methodology," *JR* (1971): 176.

<sup>41</sup> Robert C. Tannehill, "The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role," *JR* (1977): 386.

<sup>42</sup> Tannehill, "Disciples," 386.

<sup>43</sup> Tannehill, "Disciples," 393.

<sup>44</sup> Tannehill, "Disciples," 393. Joanna Dewey suggests a dual identification with the implied reader; the reader identifies with Jesus by adopting his evaluative and ideological point of view (so Norman R. Petersen and Robert M. Fowler) and with the disciples in regard to situation (so Tannehill) ("Point of View and the Disciples in Mark," in *SBL Seminar Papers, 1982* (SBLSP 21; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982), 106).

tween Jesus and his disciples are on display prior to 6:30 (e.g., 4:13; ESC<sup>1</sup>), none of these would suggest for a first-time reader that “the disciples are involved in any major and continuing difficulty.”<sup>45</sup> This all changes following the feeding of the five thousand where the disciples’ blindness and deafness are on full display. In particular, the disciples’ failures are most clearly manifest during the three ESCs, though the reader may not understand the exact nature of their failures since the story gives a variety of clues.

On the one hand, the boat scenes have emphasized the disciples’ fear, lack of trust, and anxious self-concern . . . , associating these with a lack of understanding. On the other hand, the question of who Jesus is has been raised. . . . Perhaps the problem arises from the disciples’ failure to identify Jesus correctly.<sup>46</sup>

Tannehill eventually concludes, however, that this is not in fact the case for the disciples’ problems are not resolved when Peter correctly identifies Jesus as the Messiah (8:29). Instead the disciples’ anxious self-concern is still operative in the narrative long after Peter’s confession, though it “now takes specific shape as fear of suffering and desire for status.”<sup>47</sup> Tannehill’s argument implies that the disciples’ inability to recognize Jesus is not the *cause* but the *result* of their fear, lack of faith, and anxious self-concern; he concludes as much in his 1979 article:

While the disciples’ fear and lack of faith in the first of these [sea crossings] might appear to be a temporary lapse, the succeeding scenes suggest a consistent pattern of anxious self-concern is blinding the disciples to Jesus’ power and mission.<sup>48</sup>

In other words, Tannehill takes the normal logic—if the disciples knew who Jesus was, they would not be anxious or afraid—and reverses it—if the disciples were not so anxiously concerned about their own well-being, they would be able to recognize and understand who Jesus was. This is the same sort of narrative logic, a reversal of the expected, that I shall argue is operative in the Sea Crossing movement; on this, Tannehill and I are in essential agreement. Where we part company is our respective diagnoses of the malady of which the disciples’ incomprehension is the principal symptom. Tannehill points to the disciples’ anxious self-concern, largely due to his interpreting the disciples as being anxious over lacking provisions in ESC<sup>3</sup>, an inter-

---

<sup>45</sup> Tannehill, “Disciples,” 398.

<sup>46</sup> Tannehill, “Disciples,” 400.

<sup>47</sup> Tannehill, “Disciples,” 400.

<sup>48</sup> Robert C. Tannehill, “The Gospel of Mark as Narrative Christology,” *Semeia* 16 (1979): 70.

pretation that has already been questioned. In contrast, I argue that it is the disciples' resistance to Gentile mission that results in their blindness to Jesus' messianic identity. Tannehill never once mentions or alludes to Gentiles or Gentile mission in either of his studies of the Markan disciples, which is curious given his narrative approach to Mark and the attention he gives to the ESCs. If Tannehill had given more attention to setting, he might have noticed that the disciples' incomprehension largely coincides with the movements of Jesus and his disciples between Jewish and Gentile spaces and perhaps would have connected the disciples' blindness with Jesus' Gentile mission.

#### *Ernest Best*

In "The Role of the Disciples in Mark," Ernest Best challenges polemical readings of Mark and of the Markan disciples, especially those of Kelber, Weeden, Tyson, and Schreiber. Best offers two preliminary observations. First, when approaching the question of the disciples' role in Mark, it is better to think in terms of *roles* rather than *role*, for the disciples may fulfill more than one role. Likewise, when approaching the question of the purpose of Mark, a question that cannot be decided apart from a consideration of the role/roles of the disciples, it is better to think of *purposes* rather than *purpose*, for a single work may fulfill multiple purposes (e.g., polemical, pastoral, informational, historical, etc.). Nevertheless, while acknowledging the presence of polemical and didactic features, Best concludes that Mark's "primary objective was pastoral: to build up his readers as Christians and show them what true discipleship is."<sup>49</sup>

Best's approach is a thorough-going redaction criticism; he considers both how Mark has shaped his tradition and how Matthew and Luke have modified Mark. When it comes to discussing the disciples' fear, their failure to understand, and their rebuking by Jesus, he concludes that, "If the power of Jesus is to be properly understood this can only be done in the light of the weakness of man; if Mark wishes to show Jesus' power he must show the weakness of his disciples."<sup>50</sup> In other words, the uncomprehending disciples serve as a foil for Mark's presentation of Jesus. Consequently, when Matthew and Luke tone down Mark's negative characterization of the disciples,

---

<sup>49</sup> Ernest Best, *Following Jesus: Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark* (JSNTSup 4; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), 12.

<sup>50</sup> Ernest Best, "The Role of the Disciples in Mark," *NTS* (1977): 388.

They probably do this because their christology is less ‘epiphanic’ than Mark’s and can therefore be more easily understood; for that reason they do not need to stress the wonder and belief and fear of the disciples in the same way. Thus the altered role of the disciples arises not from a changed view of the disciples themselves but because the christology has changed.<sup>51</sup>

*Characterization in Mark 4:1–8:30.* Best offers little by way of the disciples’ characterization in 4:1–8:30. This is due largely to his understanding of Markan discipleship as essentially concerned with Jesus’ teaching about the way of suffering and the cross, which occurs primarily outside 4:1–8:30. It is also due to his understanding of the disciples as foils for the Markan Jesus. Thus, in the first two ESCs, the disciples’ fear and misunderstanding serve to highlight Jesus’ miraculous powers and to expose the ways in which the risen Jesus is present to the Markan community, which is represented by the company of disciples in the boat.<sup>52</sup> These episodes are about the storms of persecution and temptation that beset the church and how the risen Jesus quells storms and offers assistance in times of crisis. Best’s treatment of the disciples in 4:1–8:30, the above being just one example, is wholly inadequate. He moves immediately from the narrative to the purported historical situation of Mark’s community without any real attempt at understanding the failures of the disciples within the narrative world itself.

#### *Elizabeth Struthers Malbon*

In “Fallible Followers: Women and Men in the Gospel of Mark,” Elizabeth Struthers Malbon investigates the nature of discipleship within the Markan narrative. The title reflects Malbon’s two basic points. First, Malbon uses *followers* instead of *disciples* because those specifically identified as disciples in Mark are not the only characters who follow Jesus. What Mark has to say about discipleship, or followership (Malbon’s preferred term), “is understood in reference not only to the disciples but also to other Markan characters who meet the demands of following Jesus.”<sup>53</sup> Second, *fallible* is used instead of *failed* because, for Malbon, the disciples’ failures belong to Mark’s

---

<sup>51</sup> Best, “Role,” 390.

<sup>52</sup> Ernest Best, “The Miracles in Mark,” in *Disciples and Discipleship: Studies in the Gospel according to Mark* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986), 191–94; repr. from *RevExp* 75 (1978); idem, *Following Jesus*, 230–32.

<sup>53</sup> Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, “Fallible Followers: Women and Men in the Gospel of Mark,” *Semeia* 28 (1983): 30.

message about the difficulties of following Jesus and not to a polemic against purported opponents. In short, the disciples are “fallible followers” not “final failures.”<sup>54</sup> “What Mark has to say about discipleship is understood not only from the failure of the disciples but also from their success, and especially from the tension between their success and failure.” Thus, Mark’s characterization of the disciples, and all of Jesus’ followers, serves a pedagogical and pastoral function, communicating to readers “who experience both strength and weakness in their Christian discipleship,”<sup>55</sup> the two-fold message that “no one is excluded from followership; no one is protected from fallibility,” or stated positively, “anyone can be a follower, no one finds it easy.”<sup>56</sup>

*Characterization in Mark 4:1–8:30.* For Malbon, the incomprehension of the disciples is not central to Mark 4–8, as many interpreters have maintained. Instead “the central thrust of 4:1–8:21 [is] the search for understanding—understanding who Jesus is and thus of what following him entails.”<sup>57</sup> Thus, the incomprehension of the disciples says more about the difficulties of understanding Jesus’ mission than it does about the inadequacies of the disciples. This perspective is reflected in what Malbon argues is a detoured sea voyage. In 6:45, Jesus compels his disciples to cross the sea to Bethsaida on their own. The disciples embark but make little progress as they struggle against a fierce headwind. Jesus comes to their aid walking upon the water, and when he gets into the boat the wind ceases. Continuing on, they land at Gennesaret, and so arrive back in Jewish territory and not at their intended Gentile destination of Bethsaida. Malbon characterizes this a *detoured* voyage because the actions Jesus performs between their landing at Gennesaret (6:53) and their eventual, successful arrival at Bethsaida (8:22) are to enable the disciples to perceive the scope of his ministry. In asking his disciples to go ahead to Bethsaida (6:45), Jesus “is asking them to move out to others, to move beyond their own religious tradition,”<sup>58</sup> yet “the disciples are unable to go before Jesus to Bethsaida just as they are unable to understand about the loaves (6:52).”<sup>59</sup> Thus, Jesus’ debate with the scribes and Pharisees over ritual purity, his discussion with the Syrophoenician woman about the children’s

---

<sup>54</sup> Malbon, “Narrative Criticism,” 30.

<sup>55</sup> Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, “Disciples/Crowds/Whoever: Markan Characters and Readers,” *NovT* 28 (1986): 104.

<sup>56</sup> Malbon, “Fallible Followers,” 46, 29.

<sup>57</sup> Malbon, “Narrative Criticism,” 47.

<sup>58</sup> Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, “The Jesus of Mark and the Sea of Galilee,” *JBL* 103 (1984): 372.

<sup>59</sup> Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, “Echoes and Foreshadowings in Mark 4–8: Reading and Rereading,” *JBL* 112 (1993): 226.

bread, and his healings and feeding of Gentiles are to enable Jesus' disciples and the Markan reader "to understand that there is bread for the people on the east as well as on the west of the sea, for Gentiles as well as for Jews."<sup>60</sup>

I agree that the disciples' failure to reach Bethsaida is directly related to its being a Gentile destination, yet their failure is more than a simple matter of not understanding and Jesus' actions more than a series of object lessons. Malbon fails to give appropriate weight to the charge of hardness of heart (6:52), which is surely more than part of a network of allusions to the Exodus. After all, the hardness of Pharaoh's heart was not merely a lack of understanding on his part but reflective of his active opposition to the purposes of God. Malbon remarks that, where Kelber sees signs of discipleship failure, she sees Mark's pastoral concern for the difficulty of discipleship, claiming that "Kelber seems to demand of the disciples a level of understanding and response . . . that the Gospel of Mark insists is impossible until the crucifixion and resurrection have been fully experienced."<sup>61</sup> If so, then Jesus is guilty as well for he seems to share Kelber's same expectations, as the harshness with which he rebukes the disciples in ESC<sup>3</sup> suggests. Not understanding certainly belongs to the picture but is itself inadequate to explain the failures of the disciples. Malbon has laid the groundwork for relating the failed sea crossing to the disciples' resistance to Gentile mission but has failed to draw that conclusion. Perhaps, in her attempt to demonstrate that the disciples are not ultimately failures but merely fallible, she has overlooked the full implications of some of her own arguments.

#### MARK'S CHARACTERIZATION OF THE DISCIPLES

*Mary Ann Tolbert*

In *Sowing the Gospel: Mark's World in Literary-Historical Perspective*, Mary Ann Tolbert offers a literary-historical reading of Mark's gospel, which is sensitive to ancient conventions of reading and writing and the expectations of ancient audiences. In particular, two aspects of ancient literary conventions inform Tolbert's study. The first is that characters functioned not as individuals so much as typological representatives of the general and the universal. "Characters were more illustrative than representa-

---

<sup>60</sup> Malbon, "Echoes," 227.

<sup>61</sup> Malbon, "Jesus," 372.

tional”<sup>62</sup> and as such “were subordinate to the overall plot or action.”<sup>63</sup> Second, according to Tolbert, Mark belongs to the genre of Hellenistic popular literature, and thus, being intended for the illiterate masses, Mark was composed with a listening audience in mind. One of the oral/aural conventions of such popular literature was periodic summaries at crucial points in the narrative that served to orient the listener to the ongoing plot.<sup>64</sup>

Tolbert identifies two such plot synopses in Mark, the parables of the Sower (4:1–9) and the Tenants (12:1–12). The Tenants allegorizes the story of God’s sending Jesus to establish God’s kingdom, culminating in his death, and the Sower allegorizes the story of the reception of God’s kingdom. In this parable, the soils represent different categories of response to hearing the word of the kingdom, each of which is epitomized by certain characters within the narrative. The religious leaders, who are intractably opposed to Jesus, correspond to the hardened path; Herod, Pilate, and the rich man, whose lives are ruled by wealth and worldly concerns, are represented by the thorn-infested soil, and the good earth producing an abundant harvest symbolizes the various supplicants who come to Jesus in faith and are healed. The disciples, then, correspond to the rocky soil, exemplifying those who immediately receive the word with joy but fall away in the face of persecution. Thus, through the plot synopsis of the Sower and its interpretation, Mark has constructed a typology of hearing-response that guides the listening audience’s evaluation of the Markan characters.

*Characterization in Mark 4:1–8:30.* Following the Sower, characters in the narrative exhibit the human traits that correspond to each type of soil. In 4:35–10:52, the focus is upon the differences between the good earth and the rocky soil. Here, three interrelated principles, fundamental to the plot and logic of the Markan narrative, are at work: faith and fear are opposites (cf. 4:40; 5:36), faith is the prerequisite for miracles not its fruit (cf. 5:34; 10:52), and Jesus’ miraculous ability is dependent upon people’s faith (cf. 5:34; 6:5–6). In 4:35–6:34, the faith and courage of supplicants is contrasted with the fear and failure of the disciples. Yet, despite some moments of failure, the disciples’ successful Galilean mission demonstrates that they are still in an early, positive stage of their development. In 6:35–8:21, however, a

---

<sup>62</sup> Mary Ann Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel: Mark’s World in Literary-Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 76.

<sup>63</sup> Mary Ann Tolbert, “How the Gospel of Mark Builds Character,” *Int* 47 (1993): 349.

<sup>64</sup> Tolbert, “Builds Character,” 350.



shift occurs in the disciples “from acceptance to hard-heartedness, from possible faith to fear.”<sup>65</sup> In one moment, the disciples are returning from a successful mission (6:30), and in the next, they are terrified, afraid, and described as hard-hearted (6:49–52). According to Tolbert, the suddenness of this transformation is inexplicable, at least for the modern reader who is more accustomed to

the pattern of slow, internal, psychological development one . . . finds in modern literature. . . . To an ancient audience, however, who were already aware of the ethical type of response being illustrated by the disciples, the change would have been anticipated and expected.<sup>66</sup>

Nevertheless, while an ancient audience would have expected this change, “Why the disciples do not understand and have hardened hearts is still unclear” at this point in the narrative.<sup>67</sup> It is not until 8:22–10:52 that the disciples’ desire for human glory, status, and power are identified as the characteristic human flaws that underlie and account for their hardness of heart.

In 6:35–8:21, the disciples’ increasing hard-heartedness is paralleled by a decline in Jesus’ ability to perform miracles. Jesus’ reluctance to exorcise the Syrophenician woman’s daughter is the first indication that healings are becoming a burden. His weariness is evident in his healing of the deaf-mute (7:31–37), which requires elaborate rituals to effect (e.g., sighing, spitting). The same is true of his healing of the blind man (8:22–26), which requires not only rituals but two attempts to effect. The decline in Jesus’ abilities is also evident in the second feeding, which when compared to the first requires more loaves (7 versus 5) to feed less people (4000 versus 5000) and results in fewer baskets of leftovers (7 versus 12). When these numbers are rehearsed in ESC<sup>3</sup>, they not only emphasize the disciples’ misunderstanding but highlight Jesus’ diminishing power. According to Tolbert, that Jesus’ power wanes as the disciples’ faithlessness increases is not accidental. “Since, as the audience fully realizes, Jesus’ power depends upon faithful response, the difficulties of these healings indicate the proliferation of unfruitful ground around Jesus.”<sup>68</sup>

Tolbert rightly sees a relationship between faith and miracles in Mark, yet the situation is more complex than her thesis suggests. For example, while the unbelief of Jesus’ hometown negatively affects his ability to heal (6:5–6), his healing of the man

---

<sup>65</sup> Tolbert, *Sowing*, 178.

<sup>66</sup> Tolbert, *Sowing*, 198.

<sup>67</sup> Tolbert, *Sowing*, 198.

<sup>68</sup> Tolbert, *Sowing*, 187.

with a withered hand occurs in the face of fierce opposition and unbelief (3:1–6). Likewise, Jesus’ authority over the sea in ESC<sup>1</sup> and ESC<sup>2</sup> is not affected by the disciples’ fear and faithlessness. Thus, evidence exists in Mark that directly contradicts Tolbert’s claim that the hard-heartedness of Jesus’ disciples and opponents results in a decline in Jesus’ miraculous abilities. Moreover, her evidence for such a decline is thoroughly unconvincing. How, for example, can Jesus’ initial reluctance to heal the Syrophoenician’s daughter reflect his declining abilities when he ultimately performs the exorcism at an unprecedented distance?

Tolbert also makes a strong case for understanding the description of the disciples’ hardness of heart in 6:52 as signaling a sudden and decidedly negative turn in the their characterization, yet she does not adequately account for why the disciples are described as having hardened hearts at this particular point in the narrative. Instead of analyzing the immediate and surrounding context of 6:52, Tolbert appeals to universal human traits displayed by the disciples in the following section (8:22–10:52). Yet it remains unclear how their desire for glory, status, and power, which is manifest much later in the narrative, explains or relates to their hard-heartedness in ESC<sup>2</sup> and ESC<sup>3</sup>, or indeed to any of their other failings within 6:35–8:21. Here, Tolbert offers a generic explanation that could apply to any narrative in which characters are described as hard-hearted, where what is needed is a narrative-specific explanation, that is, an explanation that attends to the particularities of the Markan narrative. For example, when discussing the suddenness of the disciples’ negative characterization in 6:52, Tolbert writes, “the narrator bluntly informs the audience that the disciples did not understand, for ‘their hearts were hardened,’”<sup>69</sup> but this does not accurately represent what the narrator actually says. The disciples do not simply not understand, they do not understand *about the loaves*. What is missing from Tolbert’s statement, and more importantly from her analysis, is the one element in 6:52 that holds the key to comprehending why the narrator describes the disciples as hard-hearted at this point in the narrative. It would seem, then, that Tolbert’s understanding of ancient characters as types causes her to focus so much upon generalities and universals that she overlooks the specifics of the Markan narrative.

---

<sup>69</sup> Tolbert, *Sowing*, 198.

Jack Dean Kingsbury

In *Conflict in Mark: Jesus, Authorities, Disciples*, Jack Dean Kingsbury engages in a narrative-critical study of Mark's gospel focused upon the conflicts between Jesus, the protagonist, and the two groups with whom he is most often in struggle, the religious authorities and his own disciples. For Kingsbury, "the force driving the story forward is the element of conflict,"<sup>70</sup> and underlying the conflict between Jesus and his disciples is the opposition between divine and human points of view. Jesus always "thinks the things of God" whereas the disciples almost always "think the things of humans." The disciples are round characters, possessing two conflicting traits; they "are at once 'loyal' and 'uncomprehending.'"<sup>71</sup> Jesus calls the disciples, teaches them, and gives them the power and authority to perform his words and works. Yet, their ever-persistent incomprehension about who Jesus is, what he is about, and what it means to follow him threatens to undermine their loyalty.

In their hearts, they are divided: Although they are committed to Jesus, they seem unable to view reality, as he does, in term of God's approaching, end-time rule. Jesus' struggle is to lead the disciples to overcome their incomprehension; should he fail to do so, it will destroy their commitment to him and their new life as his disciples.<sup>72</sup>

*Characterization in Mark 4:1–8:30.* According to Kingsbury, in Mark "discipleship has 'mission work' as its purpose."<sup>73</sup> Jesus commissions the disciples to a pre-Easter mission to Israel (6:7–13), which anticipates their post-Easter mission to the nations (13:10; 14:9). In their mission to Israel, the twelve are to travel light, relying upon the hospitality of those they meet thereby trusting in God's provision. Yet, the disciples are beset with incomprehension, which inhibits them from seeing Jesus as God's supreme agent and from carrying out his instructions. The disciples' incomprehension, stemming from their predilection to view reality from a human point of view, leads to conflict between them and Jesus, which is nowhere more apparent than in the three ESCs and the two feedings.

In ESC<sup>1</sup>, despite having witnessed Jesus' power on numerous occasions, the disciples are without faith, having adopted a human point of view of their stormy situation, and so their fear at the storm's abatement reflects incomprehension not

---

<sup>70</sup> Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Conflict in Mark: Jesus, Authorities, Disciples* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 28.

<sup>71</sup> Kingsbury, *Conflict*, 9.

<sup>72</sup> Kingsbury, *Conflict*, 103.

<sup>73</sup> Kingsbury, *Conflict*, 91.

reverence. Likewise, in the first feeding, when Jesus commands the disciples to feed the people, he expects them “to face this challenge by ‘thinking the things of God,’”<sup>74</sup> but they do not, failing to avail themselves of the authority that he has given them, which they have already exercised in their successful Galilean mission. In ESC<sup>2</sup>, the disciples are once again without understanding. In compelling them to set sail for Bethsaida, Jesus is giving them a mission. The disciples construe this mission in purely human terms and again fail to avail themselves of the authority Jesus has given them, this time against the contrary wind. Moreover, the disciples mistake Jesus for a ghost and thus miss his epiphany as God’s Son, just as they missed his revelation as Israel’s Shepherd-King in the feeding of the five thousand. Their incomprehension reappears in the feeding of the four thousand, where they are still oblivious to Jesus’ identity and authority. In short, what unites the boat and feeding episodes is the recurrence of the disciples’ incomprehension, specifically their inability to comprehend who Jesus is and the nature of his authority, which they also possess. This state of affairs is recapitulated in ESC<sup>3</sup> and, according to Kingsbury, is attributed to the disciples’ human-oriented vision.

Kingsbury correctly characterizes the conflict between Jesus and the disciples as a conflict between “thinking the things of God” versus “thinking the things of humans.” As Petersen has demonstrated, on the ideological plane of Mark’s gospel, characters are evaluated according to these two evaluative points of view, which are explicitly stated in 8:33.<sup>75</sup> Yet, Kingsbury’s study lacks precision. Repeatedly describing the disciples’ failures as a result their human point of view, obscures the exact nature of the conflict between Jesus and his disciples and causes him to overlook important elements of the story.

For example, Kingsbury assumes that Jesus is sending the disciples on a mission when he compels them to embark for Bethsaida. He notes that Bethsaida is on the eastern shore and that they land at Gennesaret on the western shore but makes nothing of this discrepancy. Yet, might the discrepancy between the intended and actual destinations, coming as it does on the heels of 6:52, which Kingsbury treats as fundamental to the conflict between Jesus and his disciples, have something to contribute to our understanding of the nature of their conflict? The problem concerns

---

<sup>74</sup> Kingsbury, *Conflict*, 98.

<sup>75</sup> Norman R. Petersen, “Point of View’ in Mark’s Narrative,” *Semeia* 12 (1978): 107.

the nature of the mission Jesus has given the disciples, which for Kingsbury merely involves their crossing the sea absent anything that might be expecting of them upon their arrival on the other side. Kingsbury regards the crossing itself as the mission, yet this is an unusual understanding of mission and one that does not correspond to the disciples' vocation as fishers of people. I agree that Jesus, in compelling the disciples to embark for Bethsaida, is sending them on a mission but believe this mission to include certain activities upon their arrival. In other words, the sea crossing is the means to an end, not the end itself. This, of course, affects how one understands the failure of the disciples during ESC<sup>2</sup>, its connection with the feeding of the five thousand, and thus the nature of the conflict between the disciples and Jesus.

*Suzanne Watts Henderson*

In *Christology and Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark*, Suzanne Watts Henderson charts a new course for dealing with the question of the incomprehension of the disciples in Mark. Dissatisfied with the prevailing tendency to define the disciples' failures in christological terms, that is, as a failure to apprehend and understand Jesus' messianic identity, Henderson investigates the incomprehension of the Markan disciples against the backdrop of "the nature of discipleship in its intended form."<sup>76</sup> Henderson seeks not to supplant Mark's obvious christological emphasis but to demonstrate the complementary role of Mark's equally-pronounced emphasis upon discipleship.

The expectations for discipleship are established early on in the narrative. Immediately following and integrally tied to his kingdom announcement, Jesus enlists others to join him in the proclamation and proleptic demonstration of "God's apocalyptic rectification of the world." (1:14–20)<sup>77</sup> To fulfill their vocation to become fishers of people, the disciples receive an apostolic commission in two parts; they are to be with Jesus (presence) and to be sent out to preach and exorcise, that is, to do the things that Jesus does (practice). For Henderson,

the intended pattern of discipleship established early in the gospel provides a vital framework for the narrative's unfolding account of the relationship between Jesus and his disciples. By combining the followers' call to be in Jesus' *presence* and [sic] with the expectation that they will *practice* the demonstration of God's coming kingdom, the evangelist

---

<sup>76</sup> Suzanne Watts Henderson, *Christology and Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark* (SNTSMS 135; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 15.

<sup>77</sup> Henderson, *Christology and Discipleship*, 16.

sets the terms for understanding the gospel's account of the disciples' mounting incomprehension.<sup>78</sup>

Thus, Henderson's investigation begins not with the failures of the disciples but with "the topic of discipleship as depicted from the outset of Mark's gospel up to the narrative moment when the evangelist first ascribes explicit incomprehension to the disciples,"<sup>79</sup> which she identifies as 6:52.

*Characterization in Mark 4:1–8:30.* Prior to 6:52, the disciples are generally portrayed positively. Having been called and commissioned, the disciples are entrusted with the mystery of the kingdom of God, which is "the good news of God's assured dominion,"<sup>80</sup> and as its stewards are expected to share it indiscriminately with others, much as the sower casts seeds indiscriminately on every type of soil. When Jesus is limited in his effectiveness in his hometown (6:5–6), the disciples are sent out on their first mission and enjoy great success (6:7–13, 30). Even their portrayal in the feeding of the five thousand is principally positive. Though they do not understand how Jesus expects them to feed the crowd, the disciples are, nevertheless, the ones who brought the problem to Jesus' attention. Moreover, by the end of the episode,

The disciples [have] become actively engaged in the feeding act, ultimately fulfilling Jesus' initial command to them. Not only does Jesus marshal the disciples' *own foodstuffs* to provide, miraculously, for the need of the multitude; he enlists *them* in the distribution itself.<sup>81</sup>

Thus, the disciples have thus been transformed "from helpless figures who perceive a problem but propose an inadequate solution ('send them away') to empowered participants in God's eschatological feast."<sup>82</sup> This sets the stage for understanding the nature of their incomprehension in the ensuing ESC<sup>2</sup>.

In 6:45, Jesus compels his disciples to cross over to Bethsaida. Henderson notes that this is only the second time Jesus has sent the disciples away from his presence, which recalls their successful Galilean mission. The goal for this mission is for the disciples to exercise their exorcistic authority over the sea much as Jesus had done in ESC<sup>1</sup>. The disciples, however, do not replicate their earlier success. Tormented in their rowing, Jesus must come to them. His intention in passing by them is

---

<sup>78</sup> Henderson, *Christology and Discipleship*, 24.

<sup>79</sup> Henderson, *Christology and Discipleship*, 24.

<sup>80</sup> Henderson, *Christology and Discipleship*, 24.

<sup>81</sup> Suzanne Watts Henderson, "'Concerning the Loaves': Comprehending Incomprehension in Mark 6.45–52," *JSNT* 83 (2001): 14.

<sup>82</sup> Henderson, *Christology and Discipleship*, 175.

to reveal himself in hope that a visual reminder of his presence will inspire them to exercise the authority previously granted to them and so complete their mission.<sup>83</sup> Yet, Jesus' self-disclosure fails; it is only when he climbs into the boat and is once again *present* with his disciples that the sea calms down. Thus, what the disciples failed to grasp about the loaves

is their own part in Jesus' mission, their own power over the evil spirits embodied in the sea, their own responsibility to exercise the authority Jesus has entrusted them and recalled for them in his effort to 'pass them by.'<sup>84</sup>

The strength of Henderson's argument lies in the attention given to the final form of Mark's narrative and its attempt to understand the disciples' incomprehension from within the narrative world the author has created. More than any other study reviewed, Henderson's demonstrates the breadth and depth of the positive portrayal of the Markan disciples up through the first feeding, which does not solve the problem of the disciples' incomprehension but actually sharpens it. Henderson's study, however, is open to the same critiques as Kingsbury's especially regarding the nature of the disciples' incomprehension in ESC<sup>2</sup>, despite having offered a more compelling argument than Kingsbury's. For example, Henderson questions those who see in τοῖς ἄρτοις of 6:52 a cryptic reference to the feeding story as a whole, yet her own interpretation that τοῖς ἄρτοις refers specifically to the disciples' participation in the feeding story, which had they understood would have rendered them able to overcome the tempestuous sea, is even less obvious. After all, what do loaves of bread have to do with exorcisms?

At this point, judgment will be reserved regarding Henderson's interpretation of τοῖς ἄρτοις for soon afterwards Jesus responds to a Gentile woman's request for an exorcism with a riddle about a loaf of bread, suggesting that there is a connection between loaves and exorcisms in Mark. For now, suffice it to say this exchange between Jesus and this woman concerns Jewish mission to Gentiles. Thus, if Henderson is correct that the disciples' failure to understand about the loaves relates to their failure to exorcise the sea, I would suggest that Henderson, like Kingsbury, has not taken her insights to their logical conclusion. The disciples' crossing of the sea is more than an opportunity to exercise their authority over the sea. Had the disciples' successfully

---

<sup>83</sup> Here one sees Henderson's indebtedness to Kingsbury.

<sup>84</sup> Henderson, "Concerning the Loaves," 23.

exorcised the sea it would have been only a means to an end, not an end itself; after all, Jesus' exorcism of the sea in ESC<sup>1</sup> was not the goal of the sea crossing but made possible his healing of the Gentile demoniac on the opposite side. Moreover, as Henderson herself notes, the only other time Jesus sends the disciples forth it was for them to engage in a mission of preaching and healing. Could it be, then, that in compelling the disciples to cross over to Bethsaida, Jesus is sending them on a second mission to preach, to heal and exorcise, and even to *feed* those on the opposite shore, i.e., Gentiles? Might not this provide a better explanation of what it means that the disciples did not understand about the loaves? Perhaps the disciples' failure during ESC<sup>2</sup> is occasioned by a purposeful resistance to Gentile mission, which would explain why their failure is attributed to hardened hearts? Henderson, like many before, has made important contributions to the problem of the nature of the disciples' incomprehension in Mark 4:1–8:30, yet even in this recent study important issues are left unexplored and so there is still a need for a fresh attempt.

#### CONCLUSION

Those reviewed are generally agreed that, since the disciples play such a prominent role in Mark, our understanding of the gospel's overall purpose(s) is contingent upon our understanding of the disciples' role within the narrative. All are also agreed that incomprehension is fundamental to their negative characterization and so a significant factor in how one interprets the Markan narrative. Yet, despite such fundamental agreements, disagreements on a number of important matters still remain. In particular, issues that prove crucial for understanding the Sea Crossing movement still defy any consensus. For example, interpreters are at odds regarding the precise nature of the disciples' incomprehension within this movement, and there remains no credible explanation for the severity of the language applied to the disciples by the narrator and Jesus (e.g., 6:52; 8:17–18). While a number of those reviewed point to ESC<sup>2</sup> as the place where the real negative characterization of the disciples commences, on the whole little interest has been shown in explaining why it occurs at this point in the narrative, and so this important issue remains unexplored. There is also a notable imprecision in how scholars describe the negative (and positive) aspects of the disciples' characterization. For example, scholars still speak of the disciples' lack of faith in ESC<sup>3</sup> despite the complete absence of references to faith and/or to fear, which is sometimes associated with a lack of faith in Mark. Granted, the au-



thor could portray the disciples as lacking faith without explicitly employing that language, but then there should at least be some recognition of this fact on the part of interpreters. Therefore, while everyone reviewed agrees that Mark's treatment of the disciples is distinctive and of prime importance for understanding Mark's narrative and purposes, no consensus has been reached regarding the nature of the their incomprehension in 4:1–8:30 and other related matters.

Of particular significance for this study is that none of those reviewed attributes resistance, let alone purposeful resistance, to the Markan disciples.<sup>85</sup> This study seeks to demonstrate not only the existence of such willful opposition but also its importance for understanding the nature of the disciples' incomprehension. By positing resistance, a better account can be given for the harsh critique of the disciples, especially the charge of hardness of heart. Moreover, positing resistance provides a context for explaining some of the more idiosyncratic and troublesome aspects of Mark's story that have been a source of ongoing speculation and debate. For example, why must Jesus *force* the disciples to go to Bethsaida (6:45), and then why do they land at Gennesaret instead (6:53)? What does it mean that the disciples do not understand about the loaves (6:52)? Why does Jesus' dialogue with the Syrophenician woman take the form it does (7:24–30)? In short, I intend to demonstrate that positing purposeful resistance on the part of the Markan disciples serves to expose the narrative logic underlying the disciples' incomprehension; purposeful resistance discloses the laws that govern characters' comprehension of Jesus in Mark's narrative as constructed by the implied author and according to which the nature of the disciples' comprehension and incomprehension is to be understood.<sup>86</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup> At least regarding 4:1–8:30. Occasionally, the language of resistance is employed to characterize the disciples' reaction to Jesus' teachings regarding his suffering and death in the following section.

<sup>86</sup> Here, *narrative logic* is being employed in a manner similar to that of Hays' description of the logic of narrative shape. "A story posits *patterns* of order and value. Certain networks of relationship among characters are established, and effects follow from some specified causes rather than from others. A 'world' of possible and appropriate action is thus established by the story. . . . [T]he 'shape' of a story . . . is determined not so much by logical necessity as by the actual unfolding of the story. The constraints of narrative logic are thus determined by contingent and particular events rather than by 'the necessary truths of reason'" (Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1–4:11* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 195–96).

## THE PLAN FOR THIS STUDY

The plan for this study is as follows. Chapter Two presents the methodological approach being employed in this study, which is essentially narrative criticism informed by a theory of cognitive linguistics known as Construction Grammar. Chapter Three argues that Mark 4:1–8:30 comprises a major narrative movement, one of five such movements in Mark. This movement is organized around the three ESCs, and so called the Sea Crossing movement. In Chapters Five and Six, two Markan motifs—the Sea Crossing motif and The Loaves motif—are identified and examined. These chapters are preceded by a discussion of literary motifs in Chapter Four, which offers a working definition of literary motif and a method for establishing the presence of literary motifs in Mark.

In Chapter Seven, the insights garnered from exploring these two Markan motifs are drawn together to form the foundation of a narrative-critical reading of the characterization of the disciples within the Sea Crossing movement, leading to the establishment of this study's principal thesis (Thesis A), which concerns the narrative logic of the Markan disciples' incomprehension; namely, that *in Mark 4:1–8:26, the disciples are characterized as resistant to Jesus' Gentile mission and to their participation in that mission, the chief consequence being that they are rendered incapable of recognizing Jesus' vocational identity*. Chapter Seven then shows how Thesis A contributes to the reader's understanding of Peter's unexpected recognition of Jesus' messianic identity in 8:27–30, which leads to a secondary thesis (Thesis B); namely, that, *in Mark 8:27–30, Peter's recognition of Jesus' messianic identity indicates that the disciples have finally come to accept Jesus' Gentile mission and their participation in it*. Finally, the concluding part of the chapter offers a brief summary of the conclusions and implications of the study as a whole.

## CHAPTER TWO

# THE RHETORIC OF REPETITION



### NARRATIVE CRITICISM

I have characterized this study as an attempt to expose and expound the underlying narrative logic of the disciples' increasing incomprehension within the Sea Crossing movement. Given this objective, the issues and questions being investigated lend themselves most naturally to narrative criticism, which provides the necessary perspectives and tools for exploring events and characters within Mark's story and their relation to one another. Narrative criticism has become an accepted and increasingly prominent method in biblical studies, especially in gospel studies. There is no need, therefore, to defend narrative criticism as a method appropriate to Mark, to review its origins and development as a literary method, or to offer a detailed discussion of its presuppositions and features. All of this has already been done,<sup>1</sup> and besides this study is an exercise in narrative criticism not narratology.<sup>2</sup> That being said, one always finds some variation in understanding and practice among those who employ

---

<sup>1</sup> Consult the following along with their cited bibliography. For the origins and development of narrative criticism, see Mark Allan Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?* (GBS; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 1–21; Stephen D. Moore, *Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), 3–68. For a description of the methods and procedures of narrative criticism, see Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 23–84, 103–5. For the narrative poetics of Mark's gospel, see David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (2d ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999); Stephen H. Smith, *A Lion with Wings: A Narrative-Critical Approach to Mark's Gospel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> "Narrative criticism has strong affinities with narratology. . . . But the differences are just as striking. Narratology is about theory, narrative criticism is about exegesis. Narratologists analyze texts mainly to develop theories. Narrative critics utilize theory mainly to explicate texts." Moore, *Literary Criticism*, 51; see also 52–55.

the same basic method, and so I shall offer a brief introduction to the narrative-critical perspectives and features that govern this investigation, followed by more detailed treatments of those elements of narrative criticism that play a more significant role in this study.

#### NARRATIVE CRITICISM — BASIC PERSPECTIVES

As a species of literary criticism,<sup>3</sup> narrative criticism is distinguished from historical criticism in its various manifestations (i.e., form, source, and redaction criticisms), (1) by its focus upon the final form of the text independent of its composition or reception histories; (2) by its emphasis upon the unity of the text vis-à-vis an emphasis upon individual pericopae or units of traditional material; (3) by its attention to textual features “immanent to the narrative,” as in its concern with implied authors and readers versus real authors and readers who are “extrinsic and accidental to the narrative;”<sup>4</sup> and (4) by its interest in the text as an end in itself and not as a means to an end, as reflected in its interest in the story-world of the narrative apart from any concern to reconstruct historical events or situations which the narrative may or may not point to, what Hans Frei calls a text’s “ostensive reference.”<sup>5</sup>

Yet, such fundamental distinctions between narrative and historical criticisms should not be taken as absolute. While their presuppositions, methods, and goals are essentially different and so not to be confused, neither is it necessary that they operate in isolation from one another. In fact, Norman R. Petersen persuasively argues for biblical scholars’ need to engage in narrative criticism as a necessary first step in historical-critical investigations.<sup>6</sup> Petersen speaks of narrative criticism as the new literary criticism, or *Literarkritik*, which does not replace but reconfigures older forms of

---

<sup>3</sup> “New Testament literary criticism has become largely narrative criticism, a label employed by biblical critics but not by secular critics” (Malbon, *Narrative Criticism*, 26). “Secular literary scholarship knows no such movement as *narrative criticism*. Unlike the other three approaches just discussed [structuralism, rhetorical criticism, and reader-response criticism], this movement developed within the field of biblical studies without an exact counterpart in the secular world. If classified by secular critics, it might be viewed as a subspecies of the new rhetorical criticism or as a variety of the reader-response movement. Biblical scholars, however, tend to think of narrative criticism as an independent, parallel movement in its own right” (Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 19).

<sup>4</sup> Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978), 150.

<sup>5</sup> Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1980).

<sup>6</sup> Norman R. Petersen, *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics* (GBS; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978).

*Literarkritik* (i.e., redaction, source, and form criticisms).<sup>7</sup> The inverse is equally true. Historical criticism is an informative and at times necessary tool for narrative criticism. While narrative criticism may bracket out historical questions—questions concerned with the historicity of the narrated events, the author’s purposes, and the community behind a gospel’s production—knowledge of the societies, cultures, and histories of the first century is indispensable for understanding the story-worlds of the gospel narratives.<sup>8</sup> Rarely is such background information explicitly presented within a gospel, but is instead implicitly encoded within its narrative and understood intuitively by early readers and also, we can assume, by the implied reader. A narrative-critical approach to Mark is, therefore, dependent upon contributions from non-literary disciplines, especially when the real reader is a narrative critic who comes to Mark from a distinctly different time, place, culture, and social situation from that of the implied reader the narrative presupposes. Of course, most narrative critics readily acknowledge the need to acquire from other methods and sources background information and perspectives that are assumed, though not brokered, by the text itself. Yet, there is also a case to be made for the utility of information that goes beyond mere background information in carrying out the narrative-critical task. For example, we shall see how an awareness of the ways in which the Markan author has redacted traditional material, while itself not a legitimate foundation upon which to draw and defend narrative-critical conclusions, can often direct our attention to features within the Markan narrative that may have been otherwise missed. This study, therefore, operates on the principle that while narrative-critical insights, arguments, and conclusions are solely dependent upon narrative-critical presuppositions, methods, and evidence, the insights and methods of other literary and non-literary disciplines are appropriate to the narrative-critical task. There is nothing in the nature of narrative criticism to preclude such a dialogue with other methods; nevertheless, care must be taken so as not to confuse different forms and categories of discourse, argument, and evidence. The approach taken here is well-summarized by Henderson:

By maintaining narrative-critical respect for the “autonomous integrity” of the text, the method in this study will depend on a close reading of the Gospel’s final form and lend interpretive priority to clues lying

---

<sup>7</sup> Norman R. Petersen, “‘Literarkritik’, The New Literary Criticism and the Gospel according to Mark,” in *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck* (ed. F. van Segbroeck; BETL 100; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 935–48.

<sup>8</sup> David M. Rhoads, “Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark,” *JAAR* 50 (1982): 413.

within its own language and structure. By no means do I deny the complementary contributions of [other methods of inquiry]; certainly the fruits of [these other] methods will be incorporated in this [study].<sup>9</sup>

#### NARRATIVE CRITICISM — KEY ELEMENTS

According to David M. Rhoads, narrative criticism is a broad area of investigation encompassing a variety of techniques and approaches; yet common to all narrative investigations are the basic elements of “plot, conflict, character, setting, narrator, point of view, standards of judgment, the implied author, ideal reader, style, and rhetorical techniques.”<sup>10</sup> Attention to these and a host of other narrative elements informs the following study to greater and lesser degrees. Space, however, does not permit a discussion of each of these elements, but such discussions are unnecessary since some elements play a less prominent role in this study, and others are more commonsensical. Instead, in what follows, discussions are reserved for those elements that play a more prominent role in the study or whose definition, impact, and relevance to the study are less transparent.

Arguably, no other single work has had as much influence upon the perspectives and practices of narrative critics as Seymour Chatman’s seminal work, *Story and Discourse*.<sup>11</sup> Although appeals are often made to literary critics other than Chatman, especially when examining individual features of a narrative (e.g., Uspensky on point of view, Booth on irony, or Iser on the role of the reader),<sup>12</sup> *Story and Discourse* establishes the overall framework within which these other appeals are made. In particular, Chatman’s models of narrative structure and narrative communication provide the twin foci around which narrative criticism is oriented.

#### NARRATIVE STRUCTURE — STORY AND DISCOURSE

Borrowing from French structuralism, Chatman argues that narratives all possess two dimensions: story and discourse (or rhetoric). Malbon offers a succinct summary of this two-storied narrative model.

---

<sup>9</sup> Henderson, “Concerning the Loaves,” 4.

<sup>10</sup> Rhoads, “Narrative Criticism,” 412.

<sup>11</sup> For Chatman’s influence on narrative critics see Moore, *Literary Criticism*, 43–51.

<sup>12</sup> Boris Uspensky, *A Poetics of Composition: The Structure of the Artistic Text and Typology of a Compositional Form* (trans. Valentina Zavarin and Susan Wittig; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); Wayne C. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974); Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

Story is the *what* of a narrative; discourse is the *how*. Story indicates the content of the narrative, including events, characters, and settings, and their interaction as the plot. Discourse indicates the rhetoric of the narrative, how the story is told. . . . The story is where the characters interact; the discourse is where the implied author and implied reader interact. Story and discourse are not really separable. What we have, in Chatman's words, is the story-as-discoursed.<sup>13</sup>

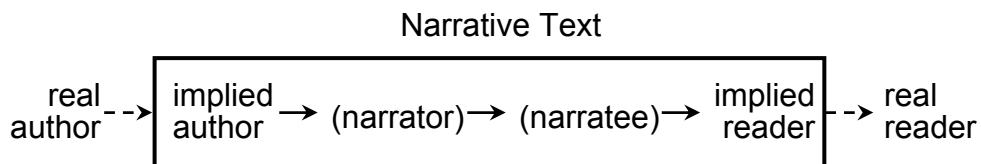
This distinction between the *what* and the *how* of narratives is simple enough, yet biblical commentators who fail to recognize, appreciate, and maintain the proper distinction between these dimensions of the gospel narrative make many erroneous observations and arguments. Consequently, this study devotes attention to the ways in which the story and discourse dimensions operate and interact within the Markan narrative, which yields significant insights regarding Mark and the Markan disciples.

The story-as-discoursed model is particularly interesting when comparing Mark's narrative to that of the other Synoptics, which often have the same story but a different discourse than Mark. For example, in an episode shared by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the characters may think, say, and do essentially the same things for the same reasons with the same results within their respective story-worlds, yet the ways in which the episode is presented—the sequence of actions, the point of view, the type of language employed, and the larger narrative context—can be so dissimilar as to result in essentially different narratives. Such differences are not the sort one expects from two eyewitnesses describing how a motor accident occurred (the story), but are more like the differences between what two politicians say when they relate an event with political ramifications. Even though they agree on the particulars (the story), they are likely to disagree regarding the cause, meaning, and significance of the events (the discourse). Many of the differences between the gospels are, therefore, *rhetorical*, for they have less to do with what transpires within the story-world than with what transpires between the author and reader. Of course, that the gospels were designed to impact their audiences in particular ways is not a new idea, but Chatman's story-as-discoursed model provides a distinctively-narrative framework (vs. historical, sociological, or political) for understanding, analyzing, and discussing certain differences between the gospels.

---

<sup>13</sup> Malbon, "Narrative Criticism," 26–27.

Within Chatman's model, one of the fundamental features of a narrative's discourse is its nature as a communicatory act. Speech-act theorists describe communication as a complex act wherein a sender sends a message to a receiver. This communication model provides the philosophical foundation for narrative criticism's treatment of narratives as communicatory acts whereby an author writes a text to a reader. "This simple model, however, soon proves inadequate for narrative analysis."<sup>14</sup> Consequently, Chatman develops a model of *narrative* communication that makes distinctions between the real author, implied author, and narrator on the one hand, and the real reader, implied reader, and narratee on the other (Figure 2-1).<sup>15</sup>



**Figure 2-1: Chatman's Model of Narrative Communication**

In this model, a real author writes a narrative text to a real reader, yet these parties are "extrinsic and accidental to the narrative"<sup>16</sup> and so are located outside the box that represents the text. "Immanent to the narrative"<sup>17</sup> is the implied author, a creation of the real author (and so to be distinguished from the real author), who is implicitly encoded in the narrative and reconstructed from the narrative by the real reader. Also immanent to the narrative is the implied reader, a parallel creation of the real author, who is likewise to be distinguished from the real reader. Finally, there is the narrator, who is not the implied author but the voice of the implied author who tells a story to the narratee. Chatman's diagram thus visualizes the distinction between the "extratextual *entities*" (the real author and reader), which belong to the historical context, and the "intratextual *literary functions*" (the implied author and reader, the narrator and narratee), which belong to the literary context and so belong properly within the purview of narrative criticism.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Malbon, "Narrative Criticism," 27.

<sup>15</sup> Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 147–51.

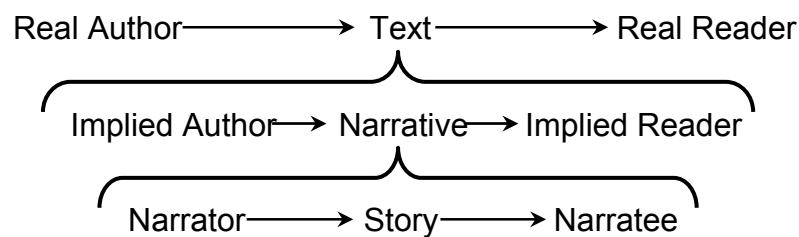
<sup>16</sup> Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 150.

<sup>17</sup> Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 150.

<sup>18</sup> Norman R. Petersen, "The Reader in the Gospel," *Neot* 18 (1984): 39 (emphasis added).



Powell offers an alternative visual representation of Chatman's model of narrative communication (Figure 2–2), its virtue being its illustration of how communication occurs at each level of the model. Here, “the text can be viewed either as the message component of a larger communication model or as an entire communication that contains all three components (sender, message, and receiver);”<sup>19</sup> the same is true of the narrative. Nevertheless, both visuals represent the same basic model of narrative communication whereby a real author writes a text to a real reader in which the implied author composes a narrative for an implied reader through the voice of the narrator who tells a story to the narratee.



**Figure 2–2: Powell’s Model of Narrative Communication**

#### *The Implied Author and the Narrator*

In Chatman’s diagram (Figure 2–1), the narrator and narratee are placed within parentheses because they are optional; that is, while all narratives by definition have a narrator and a narratee, i.e., somebody telling someone a story, in some narratives, classified by Chatman as “nonnarrated” or “minimally narrated” narratives,<sup>20</sup> the presence of a narrator and narratee is so subtle as to go unnoticed by the reader. This is especially the case in narratives employing third person narration where first person (narrator) and second person (narratee) constructions are rare or absent and where the narrator rarely if ever intrudes into the narrative to offer explicit commentary. The Gospel of Mark would fit Chatman’s classification of a minimally-narrated narrative, which helps explain why narrative critics often claim that the narrator and implied author (as well as the narratee and implied reader) are identical in Mark,<sup>21</sup> or at least treat them as though they were.<sup>22</sup> Of course, the distinction between the implied author and narrator is most pronounced in narratives that exhibit an unreliable

<sup>19</sup> Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 19.

<sup>20</sup> Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 147.

<sup>21</sup> Malbon, “Narrative Criticism,” 28.

<sup>22</sup> Smith, *Lion*, 39.

narrator. Fortunately, Robert M. Fowler's study of explicit and implicit commentary in Mark establishes the complete reliability of the Markan narrator.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, the Markan narrator is not merely the voice of the implied author but the vehicle through which the implied author's beliefs, values, and point of view are communicated to the implied reader (via the narratee). In this study, the implied author and narrator are not equated although their differentiation is of minimal significance. For example, I may speak of the (implied) author's standards of judgment, but of the narrator's intrusion (e.g., 6:52, 7:19b).

#### *The Implied Reader — The Authorial Reader vs. The Narrative Reader*

According to Powell, "The goal of narrative criticism is to read the text as the implied reader," which necessitates "[knowing] everything that the text assumes the reader knows" and "[forgetting] everything that the text does not assume the reader knows."<sup>24</sup> Yet, there is more to becoming the implied reader than Powell asserts here, concerned as he is solely with the background knowledge, perspectives, attitudes, and values of the reader presupposed by the narrative. One must also consider the implied reader's acquisition of new or contrary knowledge, perspectives, attitudes, and values acquired through engagement with the narrative itself. That is, the act of reading is a dynamic process whereby a real reader, and by analogy the implied reader, undergoes a transformation as the narrative's discourse exercises and brings to fruition its intended rhetorical impact. Though real readers are unpredictable and for various reasons may not submit or fall sway to the rhetorical intentions of the narrative, the implied reader is the "imaginary person in whom the intention of the text is to be thought of as always reaching its fulfillment."<sup>25</sup>

The understanding of narratives as rhetorically-laden acts combined with the recognition of the transformative dynamics of the reading process permits a distinction between two constructs of the implied reader: the authorial reader and the narrative reader, which are not two implied readers but two dimensions of the implied reader. In short, the *authorial* reader is the reader the implied author creates and the text envisions before the narrative begins; whereas, the *narrative* reader is the reader

---

<sup>23</sup> Robert M. Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand: Reader-Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 81–154; idem, *Loaves and Fishes: The Function of the Feeding Stories in the Gospel of Mark* (SBLDS 54; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1981), 157–79.

<sup>24</sup> Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 20.

<sup>25</sup> Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story* (2d ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 38.

the implied author intends the authorial reader to become once the narrative has accomplished its rhetorical aims.<sup>26</sup> Distinguishing between the authorial and narrative dimensions of the implied reader allows for finer distinctions to be made when analyzing, assessing, and presenting what the implied reader knows and how they know it. For example, is the implied reader's evaluation of a character at a particular point in the narrative based upon a value that is pre-existent and presupposed by the narrative (the authorial reader) or as narratively-cultivated and acquired from the narrative (the narrative reader)? Consequently, if the goal of a narrative-critical reading of a text is for the real reader to become the implied reader, then more is involved than merely adopting the pre-existing beliefs of the implied reader; it also involves submitting to the intended rhetorical impact of the narrative. To engage in a narrative-critical reading the actual reader must not only endeavor to become the authorial reader but also to become the narrative reader by narrative's end. This is not a simple task for a modern, Western reader of Mark for the

greater the distance—geographical, cultural, chronological—between the author and his readers, the more of a challenge this is likely to provide. If historically and culturally distant texts are hard to understand, it is often precisely because we do not possess the knowledge required to become the authorial audience.<sup>27</sup>

### *The Implied Reader as a Rereader*

Finally, according to Powell, "the implied reader . . . is not necessarily to be thought of as a first-time reader. In some instances the narrative text apparently assumes the reader will come to an understanding only after multiple readings."<sup>28</sup> Malbon offers evidence that the implied reader of Mark is in fact a rereader,<sup>29</sup> which is the position assumed in this study. Consequently, we think of the narrative reader more accurately as that reader the implied author intends the authorial reader to become after multiple readings, or said another way, the reader that the authorial reader is ex-

---

<sup>26</sup> This distinction comes from Paul L. Danove (*The Rhetoric of the Characterization of God, Jesus, and Jesus' Disciples in the Gospel of Mark* [JSNTSup 290; New York: T&T Clark, 2005] 10–11, 16–17), who borrows it, albeit with significant modifications, from Peter J. Rabinowitz ("Truth in Fiction: A Reexamination of Audiences," *CI* 4 (1977): 126–33).

<sup>27</sup> Rabinowitz, "Truth," 127.

<sup>28</sup> Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 20.

<sup>29</sup> Malbon, "Echoes," 228–30.

pected to become when, after multiple readings, the narrative has had its full rhetorical impact.<sup>30</sup>

### CONSTRUCTION GRAMMAR

According to Paul L. Danove, literary approaches to the biblical text (vs. historical or hermeneutical approaches) focus primarily on what is in the text and so “inquire into the ways the text structures meaning and guides interpretation and the ways the reader interprets and formulates the meaning of the text.”<sup>31</sup> One way texts structure meaning is through repetition, which can occur in a variety of forms and perform a variety of functions. For example, repetition provides emphasis by adding force and feeling and by arousing expectancy and suspense. Repetition creates unity by establishing a network of intratextual allusions that connect one part of a narrative to another and so invite exploration. Repetition also allows words and phrases to acquire particular connotations.<sup>32</sup> In short, repetition is a principal way in which a “text guides its own interpretation,”<sup>33</sup> and so opens the way for investigating a text’s *rhetoric of repetition*.<sup>34</sup>

Repetition has long been recognized as a characteristic feature of Mark’s narrative, and is well documented.<sup>35</sup> For example, when discussing the Synoptic problem, scholars often make reference to the innumerable redundancies in Mark that are absent from its Matthean and Lukan parallels. Until relatively recently, these so-called “redundancies” were offered as evidence that the Markan author lacked education and sophistication. Yet, with the increase in our knowledge of the dynamics of ancient orality (vis-à-vis textuality),<sup>36</sup> these redundancies along with the many other

---

<sup>30</sup> From this point forward, the terms *author* and *reader* will refer to the implied author and the implied reader respectively; any references to the real author and readers of Mark will be made explicit.

<sup>31</sup> Danove, *Rhetoric*, 1. Given Danove’s description, one could characterize narrative criticism as a text-oriented (vs. reader-oriented) reader response criticism.

<sup>32</sup> These different uses of repetition are highlighted in Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 47–55; Robert C. Tannehill, *The Sword of His Mouth* (SemeiaSup 1; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 39–46.

<sup>33</sup> Danove, *Rhetoric*, 1–2.

<sup>34</sup> On repetition in biblical texts, see Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), esp. 88–113; N. R. Leroux, “Repetition, Progression, and Persuasion in Scripture,” *Neot* 29 (1995): 1–25; Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 365–440; Tannehill, *Sword*, 39–51.

<sup>35</sup> In particular, see Frans Neirynck, *Duality in Mark: Contributions to the Study of the Markan Redaction* (BETL 31; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1972); see also Danove, *Rhetoric*, 3–6; Malbon, “Echoes,” 211–30.

<sup>36</sup> In particular, see Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (2d ed.; London: Routledge, 2002).

forms of Markan repetition are now understood as reflecting the oral culture in which the gospel was produced, pointing, if not to its being composed orally, at least to its being composed for a listening audience and so structured according to oral conventions.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, the repetitive nature of Mark's narrative is now offered as evidence for the author's genius and mastery.

In Mark, repetition takes a variety of forms and operates at different levels, from the recurrence of small words (e.g. καὶ, ἐνθὺς) to the recurrence of whole cycles (e.g., the passion-resurrection pronouncements). In this study, episodes marked by similarities in setting, characters, and/or actions receive special attention (e.g., the three ESCs and the two feedings), while the greatest attention is devoted to the recurrence of words and word clusters that form literary motifs. Investigations into Mark's rhetoric of repetition accord with narrative-critical perspectives and procedures, and are informed by perspectives and insights adopted and adapted from a theory of cognitive linguistics known as Construction Grammar.<sup>38</sup>

The term *construction grammar* (lower case) denotes a family of linguistic theories, the fundamental tenet of which is that grammatical constructions, and not lexical or syntactical units, are "the basic units of language."<sup>39</sup> *Construction Grammar* (upper case) identifies a particular manifestation of construction grammar associated with the writings of Charles J. Fillmore, and it is with certain aspects of Fillmore's theory that we are here concerned. Over the past fifteen years, Danove has published a number of studies illustrating various ways in which the perspectives and analytical procedures of Fillmore's Construction Grammar can contribute to biblical studies, from

---

<sup>37</sup> Joanna Dewey, "Oral Methods of Structuring Narrative in Mark," *Int* 43 (1989): 32–44; idem, "Mark as Interwoven Tapestry: Forecasts and Echoes for a Listening Audience," *CBQ* 53 (1991): 221–36. See also, Horsley, *Hearing*, 53–78. Richard A. Horsley, Jonathan A. Draper, and John Miles Foley, eds., *Performing the Gospel—Orality, Memory, and Mark: Essays Dedicated to Werner Kelber* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006). Werner H. Kelber, "Mark and Oral Tradition," *Semeia* 16 (1979): 7–55; idem, *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 44–89.

<sup>38</sup> For an introduction to cognitive linguistics see William Croft and D. Alan Cruse, *Cognitive Linguistics* (CTL; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); David Lee, *Cognitive Linguistics: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>39</sup> Adele E. Goldberg, *Constructions: A Construction Grammar Approach to Argument Structure* (CTLCS; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 6.

text criticism and translation to narrative analysis.<sup>40</sup> He offers many of these in relation to the Gospel of Mark, including a methodological study of the Longer Ending, the development of a lexicon and parsing guide for Mark, and, most recently, a series of rhetorical analyses of Markan characters. In each of these studies, Danove, to greater and lesser degrees, overviews and employs different elements within Construction Grammar, yet two concepts in particular play the most significant roles, and they are of concern here: the semantic frame and the case frame.

## SEMANTIC FRAMES AND NARRATIVE FRAMES

### SEMANTIC FRAMES

It is often said that words have meaning only in context, which implies that in isolation, words are devoid of meaning. To have significance, they must be accompanied by other words involved in specific acts of genuine communication. Construction Grammar understands this notion in terms of the evocation and invocation of *semantic frames*.<sup>41</sup> In linguistics, a frame (or script, schema, scene, base, gestalt, etc.) is an interpretive framework or context from which the individual elements accommodated by a given frame are said to derive their meaning. Fillmore gives the example of

---

<sup>40</sup> Paul L. Danove, *Rhetoric*; "The Rhetoric of the Characterization of Jesus as the Son of Man and Christ in Mark," *Bib* 84 (2003): 16–34; "A Rhetorical Analysis of Mark's Construction of Discipleship," in *Rhetorical Criticism and the Bible* (ed. Stanley E. Porter and Dennis L. Stamps; JSNTSup 195; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 280–96; "The Narrative Function of Mark's Characterization of God," 43 (2001): 12–30; *Linguistics and Exegesis in the Gospel of Mark: Applications of a Case Frame Analysis and Lexicon* (JSNTSup 218; SNTG 10; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001); "Verbs of Experience: Toward a Lexicon Detailing the Argument Structures Assigned by Verbs," in *Linguistics and the New Testament: Critical Junctures* (ed. Stanley E. Porter and D. A. Carson; JSNTSup 168; SNTG 5; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 144–205; "The Narrative Rhetoric of Mark's Ambiguous Characterization of the Disciples," *JSNT* 70 (1998): 21–38; *The End of Mark's Story: A Methodological Study* (BibIntSer 3; Leiden: Brill, 1993); "The Theory of Construction Grammar and its Application to New Testament Greek," in *Biblical Greek Language and Linguistics: Open Questions in Current Research* (ed. Stanley E. Porter and D. A. Carson; JSNTSup 80; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 119–51.

<sup>41</sup> On semantic frames and frame semantics, see Keith Allan, *Natural Language Semantics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 247–86; Seana Coulson, *Semantic Leaps: Frame-Shifting and Conceptual Blending in Meaning Construction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 17–20; Croft and Cruse, *Cognitive Linguistics*, 2–39; Charles J. Fillmore, "An Alternative to Checklist Theories of Meaning," *BLS* 1 (1975): 123–31; idem, "Scenes-and-Frames semantics," in *Linguistic Structure Processing* (ed. A. Zampolli; Amsterdam: North Holland, 1977), 55–81. Goldberg, *Constructions*, 24–66; Lee, *Cognitive Linguistics*, 8–12; Miriam R. L. Petruck, "Frame Semantics," in *Handbook of Pragmatics* (ed. Jef Verschueren et al.; Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1996). Online: <http://framenet.icsi.berkeley.edu/papers/miriamp.FS2.pdf>. See also the Berkeley FrameNet project online at <http://framenet.icsi.berkeley.edu> for papers and a frame-semantic lexicon.

learners in an ESL course who would do well to learn the words *buy, sell, pay, spend,* and *cost* or *day, night, noon, midnight, morning, afternoon,* and *evening* together

because in each case they are lexical representatives of some single coherent schematization of experience or knowledge. In each case, to understand what any one member of such a group is about is, in a sense, to understand what they are all about. . . . What holds such word groups together is the fact of their being motivated by, founded on, and co-structured with, specific unified frameworks of knowledge, or coherent schematizations of experience, for which the general word frame can be used.<sup>42</sup>

The notion of interpretive frames is not new; it neither originated with Construction Grammar nor is confined to linguistics but has been appropriated with different emphases by a host of other disciplines, from sociology to artificial intelligence.<sup>43</sup> Here the frame is a *semantic* frame because it concerns the meanings of words and the structures of linguistic knowledge and information. It is worth emphasizing that semantic frames encompass not only conceptual knowledge but also human experience, and in fact, human experience is arguably the more basic of the two for as Croft and Cruse note, "Certain concepts 'belong together' because they are associated in experience."<sup>44</sup> Likewise, Marvin Minsky, who works in artificial intelligence, defines a frame as "a data-structure for representing a *stereotyped situation*, like being in a certain kind of living room, or going to a child's birthday party."<sup>45</sup> This emphasis upon stereotypical situations and recurrent human experiences is what distinguishes the concept of a semantic *frame* from that of a semantic *domain*, wherein words are classified according to similarity in meaning independent of whether they are associated in actual human experience. Two examples will help clarify this distinction.

(1) *Car, boat, train, airplane,* and *bicycle* are all modes of transportation and so belong to the same semantic domain. In contrast, *airplane, pilot, passengers, baggage, tickets, window seat, coach, peanuts, airport security, screening, three-hour check-in,* and *no liquids* all belong to the same semantic frame given that they are all associated via a common human experience, that of air travel (and more specifically air travel in

---

<sup>42</sup> Charles J. Fillmore, "Frames and the Semantics of Understanding," QDS 6 (1985): 223.

<sup>43</sup> For the use of frames in sociology, see Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974); in artificial intelligence, see Marvin Minsky, "A Framework for Representing Knowledge," in *The Psychology of Computer Vision* (ed. Patrick Henry Winston; New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975), 211–77.

<sup>44</sup> Croft and Cruse, *Cognitive Linguistics*, 7.

<sup>45</sup> Minsky, "Framework," 212 (emphasis added).

a post-9/11 context, as some of items listed clearly indicate). Thus, words derive their meaning not in relation to other words in the same semantic domain but in relation to other words and concepts belonging to the same semantic frame.

(2) Consider the following scenario offered by Danove:

On two successive days someone receives a postcard from a friend who is traveling, and each postcard contains only one sentence, the first being “I spent two hours on land this afternoon,” and the second being “I spent two hours on the ground this afternoon.” There is nothing in the description of grammar or lexicon which can account for the reader’s understanding that the first sentence was written while “at sea” and the second while “in the air.”<sup>46</sup>

Here, *land* and *ground* belong to the same semantic domain, yet they evoke different semantic frames.

LAND and GROUND denote (profile) what seems to be the ‘same thing,’ but against different frames: LAND describes the dry surface of the earth in contrast with SEA, while GROUND describes the dry surface of the earth in contrast with AIR. The frame chosen by one word or another allows one to make different inferences: Fillmore notes that a bird that *spends its life on land* does not go in the water, but a bird that *spends its life on the ground* does not fly.<sup>47</sup>

This example not only illustrates the difference between semantic frames and domains but also illustrates how semantic frames govern and dictate one’s choice of words and, as we shall see when discussing case frames, one’s choice of syntactical constructions.

Thus, from the perspective of Construction Grammar, in a speech act, a sender produces words and constructions that are intended to *evoke* (or activate) one or more semantic frames in order to communicate a message to a receiver. In receiving the communication, the receiver *invokes* one or more semantic frames in order to establish the appropriate context and background information from which to understand the message.

[H]earers or readers are able to interpret a communication because their encounter with a word or phrase evokes for them particular semantic frames associated with that word or phrase. The semantic frames that are evoked make available to the interpreters (1) points of information about the words accommodated by the frame, (2) relationships among these words and references to other frames containing

---

<sup>46</sup> Danove, “Theory,” 123.

<sup>47</sup> Croft and Cruse, *Cognitive Linguistics*, 18.



them, (3) perspectives for evaluating the syntactic and semantic function of words, and (4) expectations concerning the content of communication. As such, semantic frames constitute the precondition for interpreted semantic meanings.<sup>48</sup>

#### NARRATIVE FRAMES

Analogous to the notion of the semantic frame is that of the *narrative frame* developed by Danove.<sup>49</sup>

The narrative frame is “narrative” in that its realized content is associated with properly narrative, not semantic, content. The narrative frame is a “frame” in that it accommodates narrative information, relationships, perspectives, and expectations in a manner that parallels the way the semantic frame accommodates semantic content. As such narrative frames . . . constitute the precondition for their interpreted narrative meaning.<sup>50</sup>

Again, a couple of examples will help clarify the distinction between semantic and narrative frames.

(1) The verb ζητέω occurs throughout Mark, ten times in eight episodes. In its first appearance, Simon finds Jesus, who has gone off by himself in the early morning, and says to him, “Everyone is seeking you” (1:37). At this stage of the narrative, there is nothing in the context to suggest that ζητέω is being used with any distinctive meaning or connotation beyond its typical Koine usage, yet over the course of its next six appearances, ζητέω takes on a decidedly negative connotation as the seeking that occurs consistently receives a negative judgment from the narrative’s point of view: Jesus’ family *seeks* him because they think he is crazy (3:32–35); the Pharisees *seek* a sign from heaven that Jesus refuses to grant (8:11–12); the chief priests and others are repeatedly described as *seeking* to destroy, arrest, and/or kill Jesus (11:18;

---

<sup>48</sup> Danove, *Rhetoric*, 6–7.

<sup>49</sup> The concept of a narrative frame is not unique to Danove but is discussed by other literary critics. Nevertheless, the particular construal of the narrative frame employed in this study has been developed by Danove, who modeled it upon Fillmore’s concept of the semantic frame (*End*, 76–115; *Rhetoric*, 12–21). For other construals of narrative frames, see Menakhem Perry, “Literary Dynamics: How the Order of a Text Creates Its Meanings,” *PT* 1 (1979): 35–64, 311–61; Robert Alter, *The Pleasures of Reading: In an Ideological Age* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 39, 122; Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 20–21, 37. Gerald Prince makes reference to different types of narrative frames, “if theme is a macrostructural category or frame allowing for the unification of distinct (and discontinuous) textual elements, it is an ‘idea’ frame rather than an action frame (plot), an existent frame (character, setting), or an image frame (imagery)” (*Narrative as Theme: Studies in French Fiction* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 5).

<sup>50</sup> Danove, *Rhetoric*, 13.

12:12; 14:1, 55); and as a coconspirator, Judas *seeks* to hand Jesus over to them (14:11). In its final occurrence, women have come to Jesus' tomb where a young man says to them, "You are *seeking* Jesus of Nazareth" (16:6). Here, the immediate context is ambiguous as to whether ζητέω is being used negatively, positively, or neutrally. Yet, the repeated and consistent employment of ζητέω in negative contexts means that, by this point in the narrative, ζητέω has acquired a decidedly negative connotation and so "places the women into a narratively developed class of characters opposed to Jesus and [thus] contributes to their concluding negative evaluation in 16:8."<sup>51</sup>

This process whereby the Markan narrative cultivates a negative connotation for ζητέω can be explained in terms of semantic and narrative frames. In its first occurrence, ζητέω evokes a semantic frame, which is antecedent to and independent of the Markan narrative. In subsequent re-occurrences, ζητέω continues to evoke this pre-existing semantic frame while simultaneously modifying it as ζητέω acquires narrative-specific associations, that is, as it becomes associated with particular events, characters, settings, themes, motifs, judgments, perspectives, etc. within the Markan narrative. Consequently, in 16:6, ζητέω evokes this narratively modified frame, or narrative frame, generated by the Markan narrative, and so provides a narrative context for evaluating the actions of the women from the narrative's point of view.<sup>52</sup>

(2) In Mark 6:41, four verbs are used to describe Jesus' enactment of the feeding of the five thousand: Jesus *takes*, *blesses*, *breaks*, and *gives* the five loaves. Each of these verbs, if employed separately, has the potential of evoking a host of different semantic frames. Yet, when they occur together and in association with ἄρτος, the potential number of semantic frames evoked decreases significantly. In particular, two semantic frames suggest themselves as the most likely candidates. First, the actions Jesus performs with the loaves are consonant with those performed by a Jewish head of household (or host) at the beginning of an ordinary meal (or banquet).<sup>53</sup> Second, Jesus' actions are also those associated with eucharistic meal practices of early Christians. So, when Jesus performs these actions in Mark 6, one or both of these semantic frames—a more general frame (Jewish meal/banquet) and a more

<sup>51</sup> Danove, *Rhetoric*, 4; idem, "Narrative Rhetoric," 22.

<sup>52</sup> Of course, "Particular words and phrases have only a potential to evoke the noted frames; and their actual evocation depends on a number of extrinsic and intrinsic factors" (Danove, "Narrative Rhetoric," 23n4).

<sup>53</sup> Technically, these are two related, yet distinct semantic frames.

specialized frame (Christian meal)—are potentially evoked for the reader.<sup>54</sup> Yet, when these same actions recur in the feeding of the four thousand (8:6) and then again at the Last Supper (14:22), the semantic frame has been transformed into a narrative frame by acquiring additional associations that are narratively-specific, such as Jesus' role as host, allusions to the Exodus traditions, the theme of abundance, etc. Thus, at the Last Supper, the concurrence of these four verbs and ἄριστος no longer evokes the semantic frame evoked in the feeding of the five thousand, but a narrative frame generated by the Markan narrative, which affects our interpretation of Jesus' actions at the Last Supper within its Markan context.

## CONCLUSIONS

The linguistic construct of the semantic frame along with its narrative analogue, the narrative frame, has much to contribute to a narrative-critical investigation of Mark and, especially, of Mark's rhetoric of repetition, since by nature semantic and narrative frames are established through repetition. How these frames inform our reading of Mark will become increasingly apparent as the study progresses, yet a few concluding remarks are worth making.

First, as we engage in a text-oriented, narrative-critical reading of Mark, the concept of the semantic frame points to the necessity of drawing upon the historical, economic, social, and cultural backgrounds of the world presupposed by and reflected in the narrative. In other words, giving interpretive priority to what lies within a text's own language and structure does *not* require that narrative readings be restricted to information that can be garnered only from the narrative itself since word meaning and usage is dependent upon frames that are antecedent to the narrative. If semantic frames "constitute the precondition for interpreted semantic meanings,"<sup>55</sup> then such autonomous, self-referential narrative readings are untenable.

Second, the distinction between semantic and narrative frames directly parallels the distinction between authorial and narrative readers (or audiences) operative in this study.

The distinction between the pre-existent content of frames and their narratively generated content engenders a distinction of two different aspects of the implied reader: the authorial audience and the narrative

---

<sup>54</sup> Fillmore distinguishes between *familiar* frames and *special* frames ("Frames," 227).

<sup>55</sup> Danove, *Rhetoric*, 7.

audience. The authorial audience is the audience for which the real author designs a work by making assumptions about the real audience's pre-existent beliefs, knowledge and familiarity with literary conventions. The narrative audience in contrast possesses particular beliefs, knowledge and literary competence developed by the text.<sup>56</sup>

In short,

The authorial audience is that construct of the implied reader for which the preexisting content of semantic frames is evoked; and the narrative audience is that construct of the implied reader for which the narratively realized content of semantic frames is evoked.<sup>57</sup>

### CASE FRAMES

Another linguistic concept that contributes to this study is Fillmore's notion of the case frame. If semantic frames provide the context within which meaningful communication takes place, how is the movement from a semantic frame (which is a construct) to an actual speech act (which requires a variety of grammatical, syntactical, and lexical choices) to be explained? How, for example, does the movement from the general semantic frame, SEA TRAVEL, to the specific utterance, "I spent two hours on land this afternoon," which evokes SEA TRAVEL, occur? Fillmore explains this process in terms of the case frame, a linguistic construct comprised of deep cases (semantic) and surface cases (syntactic).

In "The Case for Case," Fillmore argues that the notion of case should be expanded to include semantic considerations, not only syntactical ones, by providing evidence that syntactical case structures are governed by what Fillmore calls, deep case structures.<sup>58</sup> Unlike syntactical cases, deep cases are covert in that they lack distinctive markings at the surface level of language. Instead, deep cases "are empirically discoverable relationships which form a finite set of semantic possibilities having validity in many languages. Semantic cases describe certain interpretive distinctions which are necessary for human communication."<sup>59</sup>

[C]ase notions comprise a set of universal, presumably innate, concepts which identify certain types of judgments human beings are capable of making about events that are going on around them, judgments about

---

<sup>56</sup> Danove, "Narrative Rhetoric," 23.

<sup>57</sup> Danove, *Rhetoric*, 11.

<sup>58</sup> Charles J. Fillmore, "The Case for Case," in *Universals in Linguistic Theory* (ed. Emmon Bach and Robert T. Harms; New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1968), 1-88.

<sup>59</sup> Danove, "Theory," 121.

such matters as who did it, who did it happen to, and what got changed.<sup>60</sup>

Consequently,

the choice of a given verb in the communication process imposes deep case requirements on its complement noun phrases and . . . verbs are selected according to the case environment or “case frames” which the sentence provides. This implies that, in communication, semantic considerations enter into the selection of both nouns and verbs. Case frames provide a bridge between descriptions of situations and their underlying representations by assigning semantico-syntactic roles to particular participants in the “scene” [i.e., the semantic frame] represented by the sentence.<sup>61</sup>

Thus, a case frame is a linguistic construct that incorporates the semantic, syntactical, and lexical dimensions of actual speech acts. In this study, its practical contribution comes through analysis of particular case frames, and Construction Grammar provides the concepts, terminology, and method for doing so. The following discussion of case frames introduces only those concepts and methods of analysis that directly contribute to this study.

#### CASE FRAME ANALYSIS — THE BASICS

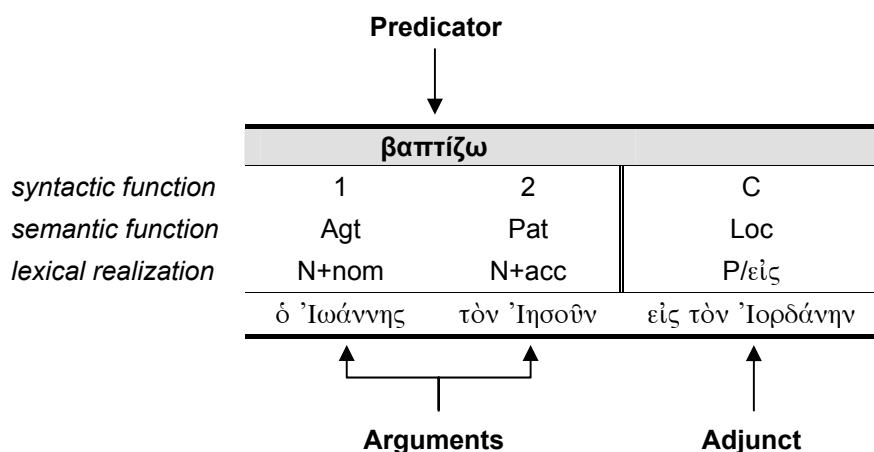
A case frame analysis commences with the construction of a valence description (V.D.), a graphical framework that represents the semantic, syntactic, and lexical dimensions of a predicator in their interrelations. A predicator is any word that “license[s] the presence of other elements,”<sup>62</sup> that is, requires one or more other words, phrases, or clauses for semantic meaning. Predicators are primarily verbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and adjectives, but some nouns and adverbs can be a predicator. The following discussion focuses upon verbs since they are of more importance in this study. The sample sentence, ὁ Ἰωάννης ἐβάπτισεν εἰς τὸν Ἰορδάνην τὸν Ἰησοῦν, will serve as the foundation for the valence description of the predicator βαπτίζω (Figure 2–3), which is explicated in the following three sections.

---

<sup>60</sup> Fillmore, “Case,” 24.

<sup>61</sup> Danove, *End*, 79.

<sup>62</sup> Danove, *Linguistics*, 17.



**Figure 2–3: Valence Description of βαπτίζω (Active)**

### *Semantic Functions*

In this valence description, the predictor βαπτίζω is shown to license two semantic functions, called *arguments*, in this case, Agent and Patient arguments.<sup>63</sup> In other words, the state of affairs denoted by βαπτίζω logically necessitates the presence of someone doing the baptizing (Agt) and someone or something being baptized (Pat),<sup>64</sup> and this state of affairs is true for all languages even if, in some languages, the Patient does not require explicit representation in the sentence. For example, ὁ Ἰωάννης ἐβάπτισεν is still a grammatically meaningful sentence in Greek even though the person or thing being baptized is not explicitly identified.<sup>65</sup> In addition to its two *required* semantic functions (i.e., arguments), the predictor βαπτίζω also permits an unlimited number of *non-required* semantic functions, called *adjuncts*, in this case, a Locative adjunct (Loc). Adjuncts are optional; they provide additional information that may be important in a given communication but are not essential for representing the state of affairs of a given predictor. Consequently, adjuncts are separated from arguments in a valence description.

<sup>63</sup> Agent designates “the entity that actively instigates an action and/or is the ultimate cause of a change in another entity.” Patient designates “the entity undergoing an action or located in a place or moving from one place to another.” For a listing of these and other semantic functions along with their semantic descriptions, see Appendix A.

<sup>64</sup> “These are deemed ‘frame-specific’ semantic roles in that they characterize in a precise and straightforward way the framework of relationships [i.e., the semantic frame] imposed by this particular verb on its arguments” (Danove, *Linguistics*, 21–22).

<sup>65</sup> This matter is treated below when discussing null complements.

### Syntactic Functions

Syntactic functions are those predicator functions that are familiar to those working outside the field of linguistics and for verbs include functions such as subject, direct object, and indirect object. In valence descriptions, numbers are used instead of the more common syntactic labels. For verbs, “1” denotes the subject complement; “2” and “3” denote the complements that instantiate the second and third required arguments;<sup>66</sup> and “C” denotes all complements that instantiate non-required adjuncts. In our example, βαπτίζω appears as a two-place predicator meaning that it requires two complements in its surface (syntactic) case structure in order to instantiate the two required arguments in its deep (semantic) case structure. The valence description shows that the subject complement of βαπτίζω instantiates the Agent argument, and the second complement, in this case the direct object, instantiates the Patient argument. The valence description also shows βαπτίζω to be active as the subject complement corresponds to the Agent argument. If, however, βαπτίζω were passive as in, ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐβαπτίσθη εἰς τὸν Ἰορδάνην ὑπὸ Ἰωάννου, then the valence description would show the subject complement instantiating the Patient argument instead (Figure 2–4).

	βαπτίζω		
<i>syntactic function</i>	1	2	C
<i>semantic function</i>	Pat	Agt	Loc
<i>lexical realization</i>	N+nom	P/ὑπὸ	P/εἰς
	ὁ Ἰησοῦς	ὑπὸ Ἰωάννου	εἰς τὸν Ἰορδάνην

**Figure 2–4: Valence Description of βαπτίζω (Passive)**

### Lexical Realization

The last line of the valence description indicates the lexical form that syntactic complements take when instantiating, or lexically realizing, their respective semantic arguments and adjuncts. In Figure 2–3, the subject complement instantiating the Agent argument is lexically realized as a noun phrase in the nominative case (N+nom), and the object complement instantiating the Patient argument is lexically realized as a noun phrase in the accusative case (N+acc). The non-required com-

<sup>66</sup> Predicators have at most three arguments.

plement instantiating the Locative adjunct is lexically realized as a prepositional phrase governed by the preposition εἰς (P/εἰς).<sup>67</sup>

Including lexical realization within the valence description of predicates is beneficial when a predicate exhibits more than one argument structure (Figure 2–5).

ἀκούω		ἀκούω	
1	2	1	2
Exp	Pat	Exp	Pat
N+nom	N+gen	N+nom	N+acc

**Figure 2–5: V.D. of the Two Transitive Uses of ἀκούω**

Here, the difference in the argument structures of these two uses of ἀκούω occurs in the lexical realization of the second required complement. “In terms of Construction Grammatical description, both constructions have associated [semantic] frames which highlight the same two parties of the [semantic] frame (Experiencer and Patient) but are distinct in that their constituent case frames require different syntactic roles for the Patient.”<sup>68</sup> This additional level of linguistic description provides Danove a way to analyze these two transitive uses of ἀκούω to determine whether they exhibit a semantic difference, that is, whether they evoke different semantic frames in relation to the lexical realization of their object complements, which, it turns out, they do.<sup>69</sup>

## CASE FRAME ANALYSIS — NULL COMPLEMENTS

Having introduced the basic elements of a valence description in a case frame analysis, we are now in a position to consider how valence descriptions represent situations in which one or more of a predicate’s required, non-subject complements are without lexical realization. That is, all languages permit the omission of required complements in certain situations; the following discussion considers two categories of permissibly absent complements: Definite Null Complements [DNCs] and Indefinite Null Complement (INCs).<sup>70</sup>

<sup>67</sup> For a complete list of lexical functions, see Appendix A.

<sup>68</sup> Danove, “Theory,” 128.

<sup>69</sup> Danove, “Theory,” 128–36.

<sup>70</sup> The following discussions are based upon the case frame analyses Danove has performed for every verbal predicate in the Gospel of Mark, which occurs in summary form in a combination lexicon and parsing guide for Mark (Danove, *Linguistics*, 149–236).



### Definite Null Complements — DNCs

In some situations, a required complement “is missing or null, but the verb phrase remains meaningful because the connotation of the null complement is readily available in the preceding narrative context.”<sup>71</sup> For example, in Mark παραδίδωμι functions as a three-place predicator, requiring Agent, Patient, and Goal arguments. In 10:33, all of the required complements instantiating the three arguments are lexically realized: καὶ παραδώσουσιν αὐτὸν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν (Figure 2–6).

παραδίδωμι		
1	2	3
Agt	Pat	Goa
N+nom	N+acc	N+dat
* <sup>72</sup>	αὐτὸν	τοῖς ἔθνεσιν

Figure 2–6: V.D. of παραδίδωμι in Mark 10:33

Yet, in 15:1, the complement instantiating the Patient argument is absent: καὶ παρέδωκαν Πιλάτῳ (Figure 2–7).

παραδίδωμι		
1	[2]	3
Agt	Pat	Goa
N+nom	[DNC]	N+dat
*	[Ἰησοῦν]	Πιλάτῳ

Figure 2–7: V.D. of παραδίδωμι in Mark 15:1

Nevertheless, this sentence remains grammatical and meaningful because the immediate context provides a *specific* referent for the missing complement, in this case, Jesus (δήσαντες τὸν Ἰησοῦν, 15:1); here then the null complement is a *definite* null complement. In the valence description, the DNC is indicated by placing brackets around the appropriate syntactical function and by indicating the absence of lexical realization with [DNC]; the semantic function remains without brackets because it is still operative, albeit implicitly, in representing the state of affairs denoted by παραδίδωμι. Interestingly, while many English verbs permit DNCs, the English equivalent of παραδίδωμι does not. Consequently, for καὶ παρέδωκαν Πιλάτῳ to be

<sup>71</sup> Danove, *Linguistics*, 49.

<sup>72</sup> An asterisk indicates that the subject complement is lexically realized in the verbal ending.

grammatically meaningful in English, the referent instantiating the object complement must be supplied, and so translated, “and they handed *him* over to Pilate,” not, “and they handed over to Pilate.”

#### *Indefinite Null Complements — INCs*

Verbs may also “permit the omission of required complements without a definite contextual referent.”<sup>73</sup> For example, ἐσθίω is a two-place predicator, requiring Agent and Patient arguments, as illustrated by its usage in Mark 2:26, καὶ τοὺς ἄρτους τῆς προθέσεως ἔφαγεν (Figure 2–8).

ἐσθίω	
1	2
Agt	Pat
N+nom	N+acc
*	τοὺς ἄρτους τῆς προθέσεως

**Figure 2–8: V.D. of ἐσθίω in Mark 2:26**

In some contexts, ἐσθίω permits the omission of its required object complement as a DNC as illustrated in Mark 6:42, καὶ ἔφαγον πάντες, where the referent of the null complement, τοὺς πέντε ἄρτους καὶ τοὺς δύο ἰχθύας, is explicitly specified in the preceding verse and so is definite (Figure 2–9).

ἐσθίω	
1	[2]
Agt	Pat
N+nom	[DNC]
πάντες	[τοὺς πέντε ἄρτους καὶ τοὺς δύο ἰχθύας]

**Figure 2–9: V.D. of ἐσθίω in Mark 6:42**

In other contexts, however, a specific referent for ἐσθίω’s null object complement is not explicitly present in the context, as in Mark 2:16, μετὰ τῶν τελωνῶν καὶ ἁμαρτωλῶν ἐσθίει (Figure 2–10).

<sup>73</sup> Danove, *Linguistics*, 51.

εσθίω		
1	(2)	C
Agt	Pat	Com
N+nom	(INC)	P/μετά
*	(food)	μετὰ τῶν τελωνῶν καὶ ἁμαρτωλῶν

**Figure 2–10: V.D. of εσθίω in Mark 2:16**

In such cases, the referent is understood to be general and indefinite (not specific and definite) and so must be supplied from the connotation of the governing predicator (not from the context); in this case, *food* is an INC that fits the semantic frame evoked by εσθίω. In valence descriptions, INCs are signaled by placing parentheses around the appropriate syntactical function and by indicating the absence of lexical realization with (INC). As with its Koine counterpart, the English verb, *to eat*, also permits INCs, making a literal translation of 2:16 grammatically meaningful in English.<sup>74</sup>

#### CASE FRAME ANALYSIS — CONTRIBUTIONS

Construction Grammar’s case frame model, in which semantic, syntactic, and lexical functions are interrelated and so analyzed together, has certain advantages over the syntax-oriented approach to grammar so prevalent in biblical studies. For example, when analyzing transitive verbs from a more traditional approach, the tendency is to focus upon the syntactic functions of subject, direct object, and indirect object. Yet, consider the argument structure of συνίημι in Mark 6:52, οὐ γὰρ συνήκαν ἐπὶ τοῖς ἄρτοις (Figure 2–11).

συνίημι	
1	2
Exp	Top
N+nom	P/ἐπὶ
*	ἐπὶ τοῖς ἄρτοις

**Figure 2–11: V.D. of συνίημι in Mark 6:52**

Here, the second complement instantiating the Topic argument is lexically realized via a prepositional phrase, ἐπὶ τοῖς ἄρτοις, and so is accorded less grammatical significance within a traditional approach that focuses more upon subjects and objects.

<sup>74</sup> “The use of INCs is much more consistent between Koine and English than that of DNCs” (Danne, *Linguistics*, 52).

In Construction Grammar, however, its grammatical significance is recognized because it lexically realizes a *required* argument.

Another advantage of a case frame approach is that it affords an objective basis for discerning what is communicated implicitly in a narrative communication, thereby providing additional tools for ascertaining the intended rhetorical impact of the narrative upon the implied reader. The following examples preview two specific contributions that case frames make to this study's narrative analysis.

(1) One of the rebukes Jesus levels against his obdurate disciples in the final ESC is the repeated question, οὐπω συνίετε (8:17, 21). As we have seen, συνίημι is a two-place predicator requiring Experiencer and Topic arguments. Both arguments are instantiated in 6:52, but only the Experiencer argument is instantiated in 8:17 and 21 (Figure 2–12).

συνίημι		
1	[2]	C
Exp	Top	Tem
N+nom	[DNC]	A/οὐπω
*	[?]	οὐπω

**Figure 2–12: V.D. of συνίημι in Mark 8:17, 21**

Moreover, an investigation of συνίημι in general Koine usage reveals that συνίημι permits DNCs but not INCs. This information leads an exegete equipped with the perspectives and methods of case frame analysis to inquire what it is *specifically* that the disciples do not understand. That is, what is being implied in these questions that has been *explicitly* stated previously in the narrative? On the whole, Markan commentators have not asked this question. Unaware of its argument structure and its usage with respect to null complements, commentators treat συνίημι as if it permitted INCs, assuming that the disciples' failure to understand is something general and indefinite instead of something specific and definite. Consequently, many fail to search the narrative for its implicit referent (its DNC), which, as we shall see, makes a significant difference in how one interprets this difficult episode.

(2) In Mark, ἐπιτιμάω functions as either a two-place or a three-place predicator; that is, it is multivalent. In one valence, ἐπιτιμάω requires Agent and Experiencer arguments, and in another Agent, Experiencer, and Content arguments (Figure 2–13).

ἐπιτιμάω <sup>2</sup>		ἐπιτιμάω <sup>3</sup>		
1	2	1	2	[3]
Agt	Exp	Agt	Exp	[Con]

**Figure 2–13: ἐπιτιμάω<sup>2</sup> and ἐπιτιμάω<sup>3</sup>**

In Mark 8:30, following Peter’s recognition of Jesus’ messianic identity, Jesus ἐπετίμησεν αὐτοῖς ἵνα μηδενὶ λέγωσιν περὶ αὐτοῦ. Then, following Jesus’ announcement of his impending fate, Peter takes him aside, and ἤρξατο ἐπιτιμᾶν αὐτῷ (8:32), leading Jesus to respond in kind with ἐπετίμησεν Πέτρῳ (8:33). Some interpreters have suggested that Jesus rejects Peter’s messianic confession, arguing that, since ἐπιτιμάω is a rebuke in 8:32 and 8:33, it should be understood as such in 8:30. A significant problem with this argument is its failure to recognize and account for the two different uses of ἐπιτιμάω, which are readily apparent from a case frame analysis. In 8:32 and 8:33, the case frame evoked corresponds to ἐπιτιμάω<sup>2</sup> but in 8:30 to ἐπιτιμάω<sup>3</sup>, which, as we shall see in the last chapter, has a significant impact upon how we interpret the intended rhetorical impact on the implied reader.



## CHAPTER THREE

# THE SEA CROSSING MOVEMENT, MARK 4:1–8:30



## INTRODUCTION

“Of making outlines of the Gospel of Mark there is no end, nor do scholars seem to be wearying of it. Yet we have been unable to agree on a structure or outline for Mark.”<sup>1</sup> With this, Dewey characterizes a century of scholarship concerned with the overall design of Mark’s narrative, a struggle that has not abated but only intensified with the advent of literary and narrative criticism.<sup>2</sup> Given this state of affairs, it seems impossible to contribute to the question of Markan structure while avoiding the impression that one is merely adding to the diversity and chaos. According to Gundry, “Modern outlines of Mark are legion, a fact which does not prove the incorrectness of them all but which does increase the burden on the person who would prove any one of them correct.”<sup>3</sup> Fortunately, neither my overall theses nor the particular thesis I put forth in this chapter require a solution to the problem of Mark’s structure as a whole. My goals are more modest and are concerned with my proposal that Mark 4:1–

---

<sup>1</sup> Joanna Dewey, “Mark as Interwoven Tapestry: Forecasts and Echoes for a Listening Audience,” *CBQ* 53 (1991): 221.

<sup>2</sup> Kevin W. Larson, “The Structure of Mark’s Gospel: Current Proposals,” *CurBR* 3 (2004): 140.

<sup>3</sup> Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 1046.

8:30 comprises a major narrative movement,<sup>4</sup> which I designate as the Sea Crossing movement. More specifically, I intend to argue that *Mark 4:1–8:30 comprises a single, unified, narrative movement, whose action and plot is oriented to the Sea of Galilee and whose most distinctive feature is the network of sea crossings that transport Jesus and his disciples back and forth between Jewish and Gentile geopolitical spaces.*

#### NARRATIVE MOVEMENT — DEFINED

Before setting forth my argument for the Sea Crossing movement, it might be helpful to describe how the term *narrative movement*, or simply *movement*, is being used. In his compositional analysis of Mark 4–8, Norman Petersen concludes that Mark 4:1–8:26 is “a compositional unit whose external boundaries are determined by its internal structure.”<sup>5</sup> Such an unassuming statement does not do justice to the recurrent patterns and layers of complexity that Petersen’s analysis uncovers, yet it articulates the principal perspective that informs this study’s treatment of narrative movements. In short, establishing a narrative movement in Mark does not begin by searching for breaks or seams in the narrative, a vestige from the days of redaction and source criticism where the goal was to isolate the individual units of tradition with which the evangelists constructed their gospels. Instead, establishing a narrative movement begins with discerning over the course of a sequence of episodes that which unites them and draws them together into larger narrative structures. “Mark’s problem, after all, was not to divide the Gospel into separate sequential units. Rather, Mark’s

---

<sup>4</sup> Consequently, my interaction with the secondary literature is limited to that which relates directly to Mark 4–8. For reviews of scholarly treatments of Mark’s structure as a whole, consult the following. For brief surveys see, Dewey, “Tapestry,” 221–22n3; Howard Clark Kee, *Community of the New Age: Studies in Mark’s Gospel* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1977), 62–64; Dietrich-Alex Koch, “Inhaltliche Gliederung und geographischer Aufriss im Markusevangelium,” *NTS* 29 (1983): 145–47; Friedrich Gustav Lang, “Kompositionsanalyse des Markusevangeliums,” *ZTK* 74 (1977): 1–3; William R. Telford, *Mark* (NTG; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 101–3. Detailed treatments include Frank J. Matera, *What Are They Saying about Mark?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 75–85; Rudolf Pesch, *Naherwartungen: Tradition und Redaktion in Mk. 13* (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1968), 50–53; Willard M. Swartley, “A Study in Markan Structure: The Influence of Israel’s Holy History Upon the Structure of the Gospel of Mark,” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1973), 39–53; Étienne Trocmé, *The Formation of the Gospel according to Mark* (trans. Pamela Gaughan; London: SPCK, 1975), 75–80. The most extensive treatments are offered by Heinrich Baarlink, *Anfängliches Evangelium: Ein Beitrag zur näheren Bestimmung der theologischen Motive im Markusevangelium* (Kampen: Kok, 1977), 68–107; John G. Cook, *The Structure and Persuasive Power of Mark: A Linguistic Approach* (SemeiaSt; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 13–51; and most recently Larson, “Structure,” 140–60.

<sup>5</sup> Norman R. Petersen, “The Composition of Mark 4:1–8:26,” *HTR* 73 (1980): 185.



task was to interweave and integrate disparate and episodic material into a single narrative whole, to bridge breaks rather than to create them.”<sup>6</sup>

Ultimately, it is this inside-out perspective and approach that explains the widespread scholarly consensus regarding the compositional unity of The Way narrative movement.

The majority of critics agree that 8:27–10:45/52 is a compositional unit, largely because of the repeated content associated with three passion predictions and related material. . . . It is the repetition of common subject matter that signals a break in the mere sequence of minimal units in 8:27–10:45/52 and allows us to speak of *its* compositional structure.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, the ongoing debate as to whether The Way movement begins at 8:22 or 8:27 and/or ends at 10:45 or 10:52 only serves to strengthen this point, for this debate over external boundaries presupposes a general agreement regarding this movement’s internal organization. Thus, a narrative movement is characterized first and foremost by its internal structure and cohesiveness and only secondarily by its external boundaries, themselves being determined on the basis of its internal structure.

In a musical composition, a movement is defined as “the primary, self-contained sections of a large composition (symphony, concerto, sonata, suite, etc.), so called because each movement of a work usually has a separate tempo indication.”<sup>8</sup> Likewise, a narrative movement contains some quality or set of features that both defines it and distinguishes it from other movements in the narrative. In music this may take the form of a different key signature and/or tempo; in a story any number of narrative elements, formal or informal, may contribute to a movement’s distinctiveness, thereby setting it apart from what precedes and follows.

Moreover, musical movements have definable beginnings and endings related to one another, often through recapitulation, which is also a common characteristic of the narrative movements I have identified in Mark (see Excursus below). In Mark, the initial episode of a movement sets the stage by anticipating certain narrative developments that predominate in the movement. The final episode (or episodes) hearkens back to the beginning of the movement, drawing together what has since transpired by recapitulating—highlighting, restating, summarizing, consolidating, as-

---

<sup>6</sup> Dewey, “Tapestry,” 224.

<sup>7</sup> Petersen, “Composition,” 193–94.

<sup>8</sup> “Movement” in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music* (ed. Michael Kennedy; Oxford Online Reference; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), n.p. [cited 16 January 2008]. Online: <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t76.e6259>.

sociating, resolving, etc.—the movement’s key plot developments, themes, and motifs in order to draw the movement to a close and also, in some cases, to anticipate new plot developments, themes, and motifs and so serve as a transition into the next movement.

Based upon the above discussions, narrative movements possess a few basic qualities: an internal structure or cohesiveness, definable external boundaries, one or more distinctive or distinguishing properties, and related beginnings and endings. In this study, then, a narrative movement is defined as a major, relatively self-contained section of Mark’s gospel in which the individual episodes and cycles of episodes cohere via a web of narrative associations and/or formal organizational structures such that the resulting movement possesses a distinctiveness that both distinguishes it and sets it apart, though does not isolate it, from what precedes and follows in the narrative.

#### TERMINOLOGY RELATED TO NARRATIVE MOVEMENT

In addition to *narrative movement*, there are a few other terms employed in this study that designate narrative units of varying lengths and require comment.

*Scene and Episode.* First of all, when the discussion concerns the narrative, the term *pericope* is avoided because it carries the wrong connotation. Pericope is employed only when pre-Markan sources or tradition are in view, that is, only when discussing units of material prior to and independent of their incorporation into a gospel’s narrative. Instead, the smallest narrative units in this study are scenes and episodes. A *scene* is a narrative unit in which the story’s action occurs within the same spatial and/or temporal setting. An *episode* is a narrative unit comprised of one or more scenes, which within the discipline of compositional criticism would be regarded as a minimal compositional unit. While scholars often use scene and episode interchangeably, they are distinguished here because many Markan episodes are composite in nature as, for example, Mark 5:21–43, where the story of the woman with the twelve-year flow of blood is framed by, or intercalated into, the story of Jairus’ twelve-year-old daughter.<sup>9</sup> In this study, 5:21–43 is treated as a single episode comprising three scenes (21–24; 25–34; 35–43).

---

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of Markan intercalations see James R. Edwards, “Markan Sandwiches: The Significance of Interpolations in Markan Narratives,” *NovT* 31 (1989): 193–216.

*Cycle.* A *cycle* is a narrative unit comprising two or more sequential episodes that share a common theme or structure. For example, Mark 2:1–3:6 is a cycle of five, concentrically-arranged episodes in which Jesus is engaged in controversies with religious opponents concerning his actions or those of his disciples.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, The Way movement is generally regarded as comprising three cycles of episodes that share the same basic pattern of prediction, misunderstanding, and teaching.<sup>11</sup>

*Part.* Finally, a *part* comprises one or more narrative movements. Thus, the terminology employed for narrative units in this study are, from smallest to largest, scene, episode, cycle, movement, and part.

#### EXCURSUS — THE GOSPEL OF MARK IN FIVE MOVEMENTS AND TWO PARTS

An earlier draft of this chapter contained a lengthy presentation of the structure of Mark's gospel, which I argued comprises five narrative movements (1:9–3:35; 4:1–8:30; 8:27–10:52; 11:1–13:37; 14:1–15:47), framed by a prologue (1:1–8) and an epilogue (16:1–8) and which exhibits an overall bipartite structure (1:9–8:30; 8:27–15:47), with each part concluding with a climactic recognition scene (8:27–30; 15:33–39) (Figure 3–1).

Bipartite Structure	
<b>Prologue</b>	<b>1:1–8</b>
<b>Part I</b>	<b>1:9–8:30</b>
Movement 1	1:9–3:35
Movement 2	4:1–8:30
<b>Part II</b>	<b>8:27–15:47</b>
Movement 3	8:27–10:52
Movement 4	11:1–13:37
Movement 5	14:1–15:47
<b>Epilogue</b>	<b>16:1–8</b>

**Figure 3–1: The Narrative Structure of the Gospel of Mark**

The presentation explicated the five narrative movements, focusing upon their distinctive features, internal organization, and external boundaries. As we shall see, the

<sup>10</sup> Joanna Dewey, *Markan Public Debate: Literary Technique, Concentric Structure and Theology in Mark 2:1–3:6* (SBLDS 48; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1980), 42; idem, "The Literary Structure of the Controversy Stories in Mark 2:1–3:6," *JBL* 92 (1973): 394–401.

<sup>11</sup> John F. O'Grady, "The Passion in Mark," *BTB* 10 (1980): 83–87.

thesis that Mark 4:1–8:30 comprises a single narrative movement is essentially unique among commentators, and the discarded presentation, though not essential to my argument, served to strengthen it for it demonstrated that my method for establishing Mark 4:1–8:30 as a narrative movement, when applied to the rest of the gospel, resulted in narrative movements that the majority of Markan scholars would recognize, especially, Movements 3, 4, and 5. In the end, the constraints of space did not permit its inclusion. The above outline has been retained in order to give the reader some sense of how I understand the narrative of Mark to be structured since its overall structure does, to greater and lesser degrees, inform the other arguments presented in this study.

### **MARK 4:1–8:30 AS A NARRATIVE MOVEMENT**

#### **MARK 4:1–8:30 — SITUATING MY PROPOSAL**

Having established a working definition of a narrative movement, I now turn to my thesis that the episodes of Mark 4:1–8:30 comprise a major narrative movement and so should be read and interpreted accordingly. My first task is to situate this proposal within the context of past and present scholarship. I begin by returning to Petersen's analysis of Mark 4:1–8:26, not only because he proposes an internal structure and boundaries that are quite close to those I suggest but also, because his study represents something of a watershed in scholarly views regarding the status of Mark 4–8 as a compositional unit. Petersen's rationale for focusing upon Mark 4:1–8:26 is that "neither this structure nor the unit it defines has been observed previously."<sup>12</sup> My examination of over eighty outlines and treatments of Mark's structure that predate Petersen's study confirms his assertion. Not only has no one prior to Petersen identified the internal structure of Mark 4:1–8:26 in the way that Petersen has, no one prior to Petersen identified a major compositional unit in Mark with these specific boundaries. Thus, I begin by considering treatments of Mark 4–8 that predate Petersen's 1980 study, followed by a consideration of treatments that postdate his study and concluding with a review of those positions that come closest to my own proposal.

---

<sup>12</sup> Petersen, "Composition," 185.

#### THE STATUS OF MARK 4–8 BEFORE 1980

Setting aside, for now, Petersen's proposal regarding the internal structure of 4:1–8:26 and focusing instead upon his external boundaries of 4:1 and 8:26, when we consider treatments of Mark prior to his 1980 study, we find that a majority recognize the end of a major division in the vicinity of 8:26. Of the 86 commentators reviewed, 52 (or 60%) identify 8:21, 8:26, or 8:30 as the terminus of a major unit, with 83% of those opting for 8:26.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, none identifies 4:1 as the beginning of a major unit, although three commentators see 4:1 as the start of a minor (transitional) unit. Eight commentators (or 9%) come close to Petersen by identifying 4:35 as the beginning of a major unit, the only difference being the absence of the parables discourse (4:1–34), which is generally regarded as a single compositional unit. Equally significant are the 54 commentators (or 63%) who posit, contra Petersen, at least one major break between 4:35 and 8:21, generally in Mark 6 (esp. 6:1, 6:6b, 6:7; 6:14; 6:30) but some at 7:24. In the end, only three (or 3.5%) of the treatments reviewed come close to Petersen's proposal in identifying Mark 4:1–8:26 as a major narrative movement:<sup>14</sup> Grant and Faw (4:35–8:26)<sup>15</sup> and Kelber (4:35–8:21).<sup>16</sup>

#### THE STATUS OF MARK 4–8 AFTER 1980

When we consider the treatments of Mark's structure since 1980, we discover that the situation has changed somewhat. An even greater percentage of scholars recognize, with Petersen, the end of a major division in the vicinity of 8:26, with 65 of the 74 commentators reviewed (or 88%; vs. 83%) identifying 8:21, 8:26, or 8:30 as the terminus of a major unit and with the majority still opting for 8:26 despite a significant

---

<sup>13</sup> 52 outlines: 7 at 8:21 (13.5%); 43 at 8:26 (82.7%); and 2 at 8:30 (3.8%)

<sup>14</sup> Petersen mentions a few commentators who have come close to his proposal but fail "to see the compositional integrity of 4:1–8:26." He praises Thierry Snoy for his editorial criticism ("La rédaction marcienne de la marche sur les eaux (Mc, VI, 45–52)," *ETL* 44 (1968): 205–41, 433–81), but remarks that Snoy "is so persuaded of a larger section having a beginning in Mark 6 that he cannot reap the compositional fruits of his impressive editorial labor." Robert M. Fowler, "The Feeding Stories in the Gospel of Mark," (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1978), 70–82; Robert P. Meye, *Jesus and the Twelve: Discipleship and Redaction in Mark's Gospel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1968), 61–73; and Kelber, *Kingdom*, 45–65 all come closer but "for the same and other reasons also fail to see the compositional integrity of 4:1–8:26."

<sup>15</sup> Chalmer E. Faw, "The Outline of Mark," *JBR* 25 (1957): 19–23; Robert M. Grant, *A Historical Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 123–26.

<sup>16</sup> Kelber, *Kingdom*, 45–65.

increase in the percentage of scholars who opt for 8:21<sup>17</sup> (Figure 3–2). Though the percentage has decreased slightly (from 63% to 59%), the majority of scholars still posit at least one major break between 4:35 and 8:21. The most significant difference between pre- and post-1980 studies of Markan structure is the increased percentage of commentators who recognize 4:1 or 4:35 as the beginning of a major compositional unit, with sixteen (or 22%; vs. 9%) recognizing 4:35 and four (or 6.8%; vs. 0%) recognizing 4:1 as the beginning of a major compositional unit. Additionally, eleven (or 14.7%; vs. 3.5%) recognize 4:1 as the beginning of a minor (transitional) unit. As a result, since 1980, there have been four treatments of Mark’s structure that recognize 4:1–8:26 as a major movement—Malbon 1992, Mann, Shiner, and Williams 2006<sup>18</sup>—and eleven come quite close—Scott (4:1–8:30);<sup>19</sup> Williams 1994 (4:1–8:21);<sup>20</sup> Bolt, Edwards, Horsley, Lührmann, and Malbon 2002 (4:35–8:26);<sup>21</sup> and Boring, van Iersel (1989; 1998), and Malbon (4:35–8:21).<sup>22</sup> In short, fifteen (or 20%; vs. 3.5%) treatments of Markan structure since 1980 have either identified or come close to identifying 4:1–8:26 as a major compositional unit.

	pre-1980	post-1980
Total Examined	86	74
Major Unit Ending near 8:26	52 = 60.5%	65 = 86.7%
Major Unit Beginning at 4:35 (or 4:36)	8 = 9.3%	16 = 13.3%
Major Unit Beginning at 4:1 (or 4:2)	0 = 0%	6 = 9.3%
Minor (Transitional) Unit Beginning at 4:1	3 = 3.5%	11 = 14.7%

<sup>17</sup> 65 outlines — 17 at 8:21 (26.2%); 39 at 8:26 (60%); and 9 at 8:30 (13.8%). The increasing preference for 8:21 reflects a growing tendency to treat the two healings of the blind in Mark (8:22–26; 10:46–52) as framing the Way movement (8:22–10:52).

<sup>18</sup> Malbon, “Narrative Criticism,” 36–47; C. S. Mann, *Mark* (AB 27; New York: Doubleday, 1986); Whitney Taylor Shiner, *Follow Me! Disciples in Markan Rhetoric* (SBLDS 145; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 199; Joel F. Williams, “Does Mark’s Gospel Have an Outline?,” *JETS* 49 (2006): 516.

<sup>19</sup> M. Philip Scott, “Chiastic Structure: A Key to the Interpretation of Mark’s Gospel,” *BTB* 15 (1985): 25.

<sup>20</sup> Joel F. Williams, *Other Followers of Jesus: Minor Characters as Major Figures in Mark’s Gospel* (JSNTSup 102; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 104.

<sup>21</sup> Peter G. Bolt, *Jesus’ Defeat of Death: Persuading Mark’s Early Readers* (SNTSMS 125; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 131; James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 20–21; Horsley, *Hearing*, 13–15; Dieter Lührmann, *Das Markusevangelium* (HNT 3; Tübingen: Mohr, 1987), 93; Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *Hearing Mark: A Listener’s Guide* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2002); 35–53.

<sup>22</sup> M. Eugene Boring, *Mark* (NTL; Louisville, Ky.: John Knox, 2006); Bas M. F. van Iersel, *Reading Mark* (trans. W. H. Bisscheroux; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989); idem, *Mark: A Reader-Response Commentary* (trans. W. H. Bisscheroux; JSNTSup 164; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 68–86; Malbon, “Echoes,” 214n11.

Major Break between 4:35 and 8:21	54 = 62.7%	44 = 58.7%
Treatments Close to 4:1–8:26	3 = 3.5%	15 = 20.3%

**Figure 3–2: The Status of Mark 4–8**

#### SCHOLARLY TREATMENTS OF MARK 4–8

I have now identified the nineteen proposals that come the closest to my own with respect to the external boundaries of the Sea Crossing movement in Mark (Figure 3–3). It now remains to look at these proposals more closely and briefly consider how each scholar has gone about defining this Markan movement, which will help to situate my particular proposal within Markan scholarship, thus providing a context for understanding and evaluating my own contribution to the question of Mark’s structure, at least as it concerns Mark 4–8.<sup>23</sup>

Year	Commentators		Mark 4–8	
2008	J. Ted Blakley	1:9–3:35	4:1–8:30	8:27–10:52
1985	M. Philip Scott	1:9–3:35	4:1–8:30	8:31–10:31
2006	Joel F. Williams	1:14–3:35	4:1–8:26	8:27–10:52
1995	Whitney Taylor Shiner	—	4:1–8:26	—
1992	Elizabeth Struthers Malbon	—	4:1–8:26	—
1986	C. S. Mann	1:16–3:35	4:1–8:26	8:27–10:52
1980	Norman R. Petersen	—	4:1–8:26	—
1994	Joel F. Williams	1:1–3:35	4:1–8:21	8:22–10:45
2003	Peter G. Bolt	1:14–4:34	4:35–8:26	8:27–10:52
2002	James R. Edwards	4:1–34	4:35–8:26	8:27–10:52
2002	Elizabeth Struthers Malbon	1:1–4:34	4:35–8:26	8:22–10:52
2001	Richard A. Horsley	4:1–34	4:35–8:26	8:22–10:52
1987	Dieter Lührmann	1:16–4:34	4:35–8:26	8:27–10:52
1963	Robert M. Grant	1:1–4:34	4:35–8:26	8:27–9:13
1957	Chalmer E. Faw	4:1–34	4:35–8:26	8:27–10:45
2006	M. Eugene Boring	4:1–34	4:35–8:21	8:22–10:52
1998	Bas M. F. van Iersel	4:2–34	4:35–8:21	8:22–10:52
1993	Elizabeth Struthers Malbon	4:1–34	4:35–8:21	8:22–10:52
1989	Bas M. F. van Iersel	4:1–34	4:35–8:21	8:22–10:52
1974	Werner H. Kelber	4:1–34	4:35–8:21	8:22–10:52

**Bolded references** highlight agreements with my proposal with respect to external boundaries.  
Underlined references highlight overlap between movements.

**Figure 3–3: Scholarly Treatments of Mark 4–8**

<sup>23</sup> Neither Boring, Edwards, Grant, or Mann offer any details regarding their treatment of Mark 4–8 as a major section, and so none of these are reviewed below. Faw is not discussed either because he is somewhat skeptical about whether 4:35–8:26 is really one section. In any case, he is unable to find to his satisfaction a quality that defines this section other than that “of immense activity and wonder-working on the part of Jesus” (“Outline,” 21).

Werner H. Kelber

In his influential study, *The Kingdom in Mark*, Kelber discusses 4:35–8:21 under the heading, “Expansion and Unity of the Kingdom.” According to Kelber, the Lake of Galilee in Mark, which functions as a topographical barrier dividing the “Galilee of the nations” (Isa 9:1–2), symbolizes the cultural divide between Jewish and Gentile Christianity. Yet, “In 4:35–8:21 the idea of the lake as the boundary line of Galilee is broken down. The principal drama of this section portrays Jesus undertaking a number of voyages on and across the Lake of Galilee,”<sup>24</sup> which serve to unite the divided Kingdom. Kelber’s study is certainly not the first to explore the significance of the sea crossings in Mark,<sup>25</sup> yet his is the first I have encountered that explicitly defines a major compositional unit on the basis of the sea crossings. As for his external boundaries, Kelber treats 4:1–34 on its own as he recognizes a change in the narrative beginning with 4:35: “Crucial events . . . have been located nearer to the western shore of the lake, but no attempt has as yet been made to depict Jesus as crossing over to the other side.”<sup>26</sup> Additionally, Kelber, as few before him,<sup>27</sup> regards the two healings of blind men (8:22–26; 10:46–52) as frames that enclose the Way section (8:22–10:52), which “more than any other part of the gospel bears the imprint of a skillfully designed composition.”<sup>28</sup>

Bas M. F. van Iersel

In “Locality, Structure, and Meaning in Mark,” van Iersel proposes a five-fold concentric structure for Mark’s gospel, in which the primary units are chiastically organized along topographical lines (Figure 3–4).<sup>29</sup> In this initial argument, 1:16–8:21 is defined as a single unit held together by its orientation to Galilee and is matched by 11:1–15:39 with its Jerusalem orientation.

---

<sup>24</sup> Kelber, *Kingdom*, 46.

<sup>25</sup> Note especially Meye, *Jesus*, 63–73.

<sup>26</sup> Kelber, *Kingdom*, 46.

<sup>27</sup> Of the 70 treatments of Mark’s structure that predate Kelber’s study, only 4 (or 6%) recognize 8:22 as the beginning of a major section and only 2 (or 3%) recognize 8:22–10:52 as a major compositional unit. With 26 proponents (or 37%), 8:27–10:45/52 was by far the most common delineation prior to Kelber’s study. In contrast, of the 90 treatments reviewed since Kelber’s study, 19 (or 21%) recognize The Way movement as 8:22–10:52 and 40 (or 44%) recognize it as 8:27–10:45/52.

<sup>28</sup> Kelber, *Kingdom*, 67.

<sup>29</sup> Bas M. F. van Iersel, “Locality, Structure and Meaning in Mark,” *LB* 53 (1983): 45–54.



<b>A1. In the desert</b>	<b>1:2–13</b>
y1. first hinge	1:14–15
<b>B1. In Galilee</b>	<b>1:16–8:21</b>
z1. blindness » sight	8:22–26
<b>C. On the Way</b>	<b>8:27–10:45</b>
z2. blindness » sight	10:46–52
<b>B2. In Jerusalem</b>	<b>11:1–15:39</b>
y2. second hinge	15:40–41
<b>A2. At the tomb</b>	<b>15:42–16:8</b>

**Figure 3–4: van Iersel's Concentric Structure of the Gospel of Mark, 1983**

Six years later in his 1989 commentary, *Reading Mark*, van Iersel refines his argument by identifying parallel substructures within the contrasting Galilee and Jerusalem sections, a position he maintains in his 1998 commentary, *Mark*.<sup>30</sup> Here the two major discourses (4:1/2–34; 13:3–27) stand as the centerpieces of their respective movements, dividing each movement into two relatively equal parts, both of which exhibit their own concentric structures (Figure 3–5).<sup>31</sup> Mark 4:35–8:21 is concentrically arranged on the basis of the two primary types of episodes in this unit, the sea crossings and the feedings, which themselves are also related to one another.<sup>32</sup> Thus, van Iersel treats 4:1–34 as its own unit which both divides and unites the Galilean section. Mark 8:22–26, along with 10:46–52, is transitional and so does not belong to any movement.

<b>A1. In the desert</b>	<b>1:2–13</b>
y1. first hinge	1:14–15
<b>B1. In Galilee</b>	<b>1:16–8:21</b>
<b>B11. Disciples and Controversies</b>	<b>1:16–3:35</b>
<b>B12. Parables Discourse</b>	<b>4:1–34</b>
<b>B13. Sea Crossings</b>	<b>4:35–8:21</b>
z1. blindness » sight	8:22–26
<b>C. On the Way</b>	<b>8:27–10:45</b>
z2. blindness » sight	10:46–52
<b>B2. In Jerusalem</b>	<b>11:1–15:39</b>
<b>B21. Temple and Controversies</b>	<b>11:1–13:2</b>
<b>B22. Apocalyptic Discourse</b>	<b>13:3–27</b>
<b>B23. Death and Burial</b>	<b>14:1–15:39</b>
y2. second hinge	15:40–41
<b>A2. At the tomb</b>	<b>15:42–16:8</b>

**Figure 3–5: van Iersel's Concentric Structure of the Gospel of Mark, 1989**

<sup>30</sup> van Iersel, *Mark*, 68–86.

<sup>31</sup> van Iersel, *Reading Mark*, 24–25.

<sup>32</sup> van Iersel, *Mark*, 123.

Norman R. Petersen

“The Composition of Mark 4:1–8:26” is the most thorough compositional study of Mark 4–8 to date. Petersen begins his analysis by identifying the boundaries for the minimal compositional units (my episodes) that compose these chapters, on which there is wide scholarly agreement, and then proceeds to identify their formal arrangement into larger narrative structures, on which there is significant disagreement. Petersen argues that “a combination of topographical content and repeated content is an unambiguous key to the formal structure of Mark 4:1–8:26.”<sup>33</sup> Specifically, Petersen focuses upon the roles that the boat and sea play in the first half of Mark, observing that only in 4:1–8:26 is the boat employed for transit across the sea. He further observes that, in each of three ESCs, the characters are Jesus and the disciples and the plot centers on the disciples’ failure to comprehend the meaning of Jesus’ actions. In the end, these and other related factors lead Petersen to identify three, triadically-composed cycles of minimal units, which contain an ESC at the heart of each, and two intervening cycles of minimal units, also triadically composed (Figure 3–6).

	A/a	B/b	C/c
<b>Cycle I. 4:1–5:20</b>	4:1–34	<b>4:35–41</b> ESC <sup>1</sup>	5:1–20
<b>Interval I. 5:21–6:29</b>	5:21–43	6:1–6a	6:6b–29 6b–13 14–16 17–29
<b>Cycle II. 6:30–56</b>	6:30–44 F5000	<b>6:45–52</b> ESC <sup>2</sup>	6:53–56
<b>Interval II. 7:1–37</b>	7:1–23 1–13 14–15 17–23	7:24–30	7:31–37
<b>Cycle III. 8:1–26</b>	8:1–12 F4000	<b>8:13–21</b> ESC <sup>3</sup>	8:22–26

Petersen employs uppercase letters to designate minimal units of the cycles and lowercase letters the intervals (e.g., B<sup>1</sup> designates 4:35–41 while c<sup>2</sup> designates 7:31–37).

**Figure 3–6: Petersen’s Triadic Compositional Structure of Mark 4:1–8:26**

<sup>33</sup> Petersen, “Composition,” 193.

In her 1992 essay introducing narrative criticism, Malbon performs a narrative-critical reading on Mark 4:1–8:26, in part, because it holds “together as a subunit within the entire Gospel.”<sup>34</sup> She stresses the prominent role *the sea* plays throughout this section, noting in particular the “considerable trouble” the Markan narrator goes through at the beginning of this movement “to make sure the narratee locates Jesus at the sea.”<sup>35</sup> Malbon includes 4:1–34 and 8:22–26 because they both manifest the recurrent pattern of Jesus working in two stages, which is characteristic of this movement as a whole. In 4:1–34, Jesus teaches in parables followed by explanations; throughout the body of the movement, Jesus follows Jewish healings and feedings with Gentile healings and feedings; and in 8:22–26, the final, transitional scene of the movement, Jesus heals a blind man in two stages.<sup>36</sup>

In the following year, Malbon engages in another narrative-critical reading of Mark 4–8, this time with a focus upon its complex pattern of echoes and foreshadowings. Malbon notes that just “as 8:22–10:52 is punctuated by three passion predictions that foreshadow the story of Jesus’ death and resurrection, so 4:1–8:21 is punctuated by three sea incidents, three significant narrative events set on the Sea of Galilee,” that echo one another.<sup>37</sup> In a footnote, Malbon acknowledges Petersen’s defense of 4:1–8:26 as an overarching unit but defends her choice of 4:1–8:21 arguing that “Mark’s patterning is reflected more clearly by considering 8:22–26 . . . primarily as the foreshadowing opening of the next section (8:22–10:52) rather than as merely the ‘episodic completion’ [so Petersen] of 4:1–8:21.”<sup>38</sup> Malbon qualifies her comment acknowledging the transitional nature of 8:22–26, with “its significant links in both directions,” and by stressing that “no one ‘overall’ outline of Mark can do justice to its overlapping patterns.”<sup>39</sup>

More recently, in *Hearing Mark*, Malbon delineates the second and third movements as 4:35–8:26 and 8:22–10:52, respectively, so that 8:22–26 simultaneously concludes the former and introduces the latter.<sup>40</sup> Noticeably absent, however, is

---

<sup>34</sup> Malbon, “Narrative Criticism,” 36.

<sup>35</sup> Malbon, “Narrative Criticism,” 36.

<sup>36</sup> Malbon, “Narrative Criticism,” 47.

<sup>37</sup> Malbon, “Echoes,” 214.

<sup>38</sup> Malbon, “Echoes,” 214n11.

<sup>39</sup> Malbon, “Echoes,” 214n11.

<sup>40</sup> Malbon, *Hearing*, 55.

4:1–34, which Malbon treats as the conclusion of the first movement. As we have seen, Malbon’s various treatments of Mark 4–8 differ regarding the external boundaries of the movement, nevertheless they all share a common core of 4:35–8:21 that is understood to be structured around and shaped by the three episodic sea journeys on and across the Sea of Galilee.

*Peter G. Bolt*

In *Jesus’ Defeat of Death*, Bolt treats Mark 4:35–8:26 as a narrative movement, which he recognizes as being “broadly structured around three sea journeys.”<sup>41</sup> Mark 4:1–34 is placed within Bolt’s first movement (1:14–4:34) due to its seaside setting. “The first major section is divided into four sub-sections each signaled by Jesus’ presence *παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν* (1.16; 2.13; 3.7 (*πρός*); 4.1).”<sup>42</sup> Here Bolt is drawing upon Kelber’s insights regarding the significance of ἡ θάλασσα as a recurrent spatial setting in the opening chapters of Mark. On the other hand, Bolt deviates from Kelber by locating 8:22–26 within his second movement, understanding Jesus’ two-touch healing of a blind man to be the climax of the final sea journey as well as the movement as a whole.

Identifying the two blind men stories (8:22–26; 10:46–52) as ‘frame’ often leads to the conclusion that this scene is the beginning of the next section. However, this rather formalist division misses the natural movements of the story. Rather than two parts of a frame, or two counterparts of a ‘concentric’, the blind men stories are both highlighted through the rule of ‘end stress’, each in their sequence. They are inter-related by way of a linear (not ring) comparison, as the respective conclusions to two linear progressions through the various scenes.<sup>43</sup>

*Joel F. Williams*

In his 1994 monograph, *Other Followers of Jesus*, Williams notes that prior to Mark 4:1, Jesus repeatedly appears beside the sea but never in a boat upon the sea, yet from 4:1 until 8:22 is repeatedly shown as crossing the Sea of Galilee in a boat. “Mark sets chs. 4–8 apart as a distinct section within the overall narrative through the repeated use of the boat motif. Particularly prominent in this section are the three boat scenes

---

<sup>41</sup> Bolt, *Defeat*, 131.

<sup>42</sup> Bolt, *Defeat*, 131.

<sup>43</sup> Bolt, *Defeat*, 131.

that present Jesus with his disciples.”<sup>44</sup> More recently, in his article, “Does Mark’s Gospel Have an Outline?,” Williams repeats his earlier arguments although he makes one minor, albeit significant, refinement; he now includes 8:22–26 within the movement because their arrival at Bethsaida (8:22) represents the completion of an earlier, aborted sea crossing that was destined for Bethsaida (6:45).<sup>45</sup> At this point, the boat motif disappears from the narrative, thus signifying the close of the movement.

*Richard A. Horsley*

In *Hearing the Whole Gospel*, Horsley sees Mark’s story as developing over the course of five major acts. In the first two acts, (1:14–3:35; 4:35–8:26), Jesus engages in two campaigns of “healing, exorcizing, and preaching.”<sup>46</sup> The first campaign takes place in Galilee. The second begins in Galilee but then expands into the surrounding regions. Jesus’ parables discourse (4:1–34) introduces a pause in the action, thus separating the two campaigns. For Horsley, 4:35–8:26 “is structured according to two parallel sequences of five miracle stories (sea crossing—exorcism—healing—healing—feeding), with additional material being interjected between the healings and the feeding in the first sequence, and between the sea crossing and the exorcism in the second.”<sup>47</sup> Clearly, Horsley’s understanding of the internal structure of 4:35–8:26 is dependent upon and informed by Achtemeier’s source-critical arguments regarding pre-Markan miracle catenae.<sup>48</sup> Reading Horsley, one gets the impression that, while the sea crossings play an important role in the organization of this act, they are not its primary organizing principle. This, in part, is related to Horsley’s reaction against those scholars (e.g., Fowler, Kelber, Malbon, and Myers) who see symbolized in Jesus’ movements across the Sea of Galilee an attempt “to ‘bridge’ the racial divide’ or create a unity or universalism in ‘Christianity’ among Jews and Gentiles.”<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> Williams, *Other Followers*, 104. In support, Williams notes that Lührmann (*Marcusevangelium*, 93) sees the boat motif as binding together the individual stories in Mark 4–8 (45n2).

<sup>45</sup> Williams, “Outline?,” 516.

<sup>46</sup> Horsley, *Hearing*, 70.

<sup>47</sup> Horsley, *Hearing*, 71–72.

<sup>48</sup> Paul J. Achtemeier, “Toward the Isolation of Pre-Markan Miracle Catenae,” *JBL* 89 (1970): 265–91; idem, “The Origin and Function of the Pre-Markan Miracle Catenae,” *JBL* 91 (1972): 198–221.

<sup>49</sup> Horsley, *Hearing*, 105.

Whitney Taylor Shiner

In *Follow Me!*, Shiner regards 4:1–8:26 (sometimes 4:1–8:21) as a unit defined by the motif of the disciples' incomprehension.

The disciples' lack of understanding, which has drawn so much attention in the discussion of Mark, is first developed as a major motif in the section of the narrative between 4.1 and 8.26. Within this section several incidents concerning the disciples' understanding are interrelated by verbal and thematic similarities that suggest that the listener should interpret all the specific episodes as one unified theme.<sup>50</sup>

In particular, the three episodic sea crossings, the two feedings, and the two parables discourses (4:1–34; 7:14–23) are the episodes in which the motif of incomprehension is most prominent and so structure this movement.

M. Philip Scott

Finally, Scott identifies 4:1–8:30 as one of six or seven primary divisions in Mark's narrative, making his proposal the only proposal of the 161 reviewed that recognizes the exact same external boundaries for this movement as mine. It is unclear, however, whether Scott would identify the sea crossings as constituting the primary internal structure of this movement. The bulk of Scott's argument is taken up with defending an exceedingly elaborate, and ultimately unconvincing, chiastic structure for the whole of Mark. Only at the end, in what appears to be something of an afterthought, does he offer an outline that attempts to represent the linear unfolding of Mark's "chiastically determined" narrative. According to Scott, Mark's gospel "is divided into parts by the development of meaning," which "is not made explicit but is indicated by a series of questions."<sup>51</sup> Yet, Scott never explains how the questions he identifies actually contribute to the divisions he discerns, and one gets the impression that his decisions are being influenced by other, unspecified considerations.

## CONCLUSIONS

Of those reviewed, only Scott's proposal matches mine exactly in terms of external boundaries, yet there is no evidence indicating, and much to the contrary, that Scott recognizes the sea crossings as constituting a principal organizing feature of this movement. Both Horsley and Shiner recognize the sea crossings as contributing to

---

<sup>50</sup> Shiner, *Follow Me!*, 199.

<sup>51</sup> Scott, "Chiastic Structure," 25.

the movement but essentially put them on the same level as other types of episodes in the movement.

Of the remaining eleven proposals, we find that, while there are differences of opinion regarding the precise boundaries for a movement that constitutes the bulk of Mark 4–8, there is agreement as to what constitutes the core of the movement.<sup>52</sup> All are agreed that 4:35–8:21 constitutes a single, uninterrupted portion of Mark’s narrative dependent upon the sea crossings generally and the episodic sea crossings specifically for its internal structure, but they differ as to whether 4:1–34 and/or 8:22–26 belong to the movement. Nevertheless, their agreement on the core of this movement remains a minority position within Markan scholarship, and so warrants a solid defense, as does the inclusion of 8:27–30 within the movement, which is unique to my proposal.

#### MARK 4:1–8:30 — MY PROPOSAL

Having situated my proposal within past and present scholarship, I now turn to my argument that Mark 4:1–8:30 comprises a single, unified, narrative movement, whose action and plot is oriented to the Sea of Galilee and whose most distinctive feature is the network of sea crossings that transport Jesus and his disciples back and forth between Jewish and Gentile geopolitical spaces. In keeping with this study’s definition of a narrative movement, the argument for the establishment of the Sea Crossing movement is presented in two phases, beginning with arguments that establish its internal organization and structure followed by arguments that establish its external boundaries. Within these parameters, any number of starting points and avenues are available that would lead to the same destination. The approach taken here is to begin by considering the internal structure of Mark 4:35–8:21, which, as we have seen, a growing minority of Markan scholars regard as a narrative movement (or at least as the main body of one), and then to offer arguments as to why 4:1–34, 8:22–26, and 8:27–30 belong to this narrative movement as well.

---

<sup>52</sup> On one level, this agreement is not particularly surprising since all six exhibit narrative-critical sensibilities. Yet it should be recognized that these scholars also bring perspectives other than narrative criticism to bear on the issue. Petersen is engaged primarily in composition criticism, Horsley’s approach is influenced by a particular source-critical theory, and van Iersel is focused upon concentric and chiasmic structures in Mark. Of course, there are those who take a narrative-critical approach to Mark that do not identify 4:35–8:21 as the uninterrupted core of a major movement.

Debates over Markan structure often revolve around the attempt to determine the primary organizational principle that confers a measure of coherence on a narrative that is generally recognized as highly episodic. Features that contribute to Mark's episodic nature are the terseness and brevity of individual episodes,<sup>54</sup> the lack of explicit causal, explanatory, or consequential connections between episodes,<sup>55</sup> the liberal use of

---

<sup>53</sup> In this study, the terms *geography* and *geographical* are used but in a rather general, unspecified way. This terminology does not adequately encompass or represent the various categories of space one encounters in Mark, especially when engaging in a narrative-critical study sensitive to how the author constructs and construes space and spatial settings through a story's discourse. Consequently, this study draws upon the three spatial suborders Malbon explores in her structural analysis of Markan narrative space, namely, geopolitical, topographical, and architectural. The *geopolitical* suborder "concerns spatial areas of the earth (geo-); which are defined by human-made boundaries of civic or governmental units (-political)" and so comprises named geographical areas (e.g., Galilee, Capernaum, the country of the Gerasenes, the villages of Caesarea Philippi) as well as named topographical features (e.g., the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan river, the Mount of Olives) (15). The *topographical* suborder concerns space "defined strictly as 'of, or relating to, the physical features of the earth'" and so comprises unnamed geographical areas and features (e.g., sea, mountain, wilderness, village) (51). The main distinction between these is whereas the geopolitical suborder "is made up of those relationships that would be obvious from a political map, the topographical suborder is composed of relationships that would be observed from an aerial photograph or a relief map" (50). Finally, the *architectural* suborder concerns spatial locations that are within "artificially enclosed spaces" (e.g., synagogue, house, temple, courtyard, and tomb) in contrast to unenclosed spaces which are, as it were, out-of-doors (106) (Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *Narrative Space and Mythic Meaning in Mark* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991).

<sup>54</sup> E.g., Juel observes that the account of Jesus' baptism comprises just three verses (1:9–11). When read aloud this scene lasts no more than a few seconds, somewhat surprising given its importance in establishing the identity and character of the narrative's central actor. Donald H. Juel, *A Master of Surprise: Mark Interpreted* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1994), 33.

<sup>55</sup> According to Hedrick, in Mark 1–13 "one finds a series of individual and independent 'episodes' strung like so many 'individual pearls on a string.' The narrative 'jumps' from one individual, self-contained segment to another with little noticeable attempt on the author's part to provide smooth transitions beyond the occasional use of a summary statement to function as a bridge between segments and the use of connective words such as *πάλιν* (again), *καί* (and), *δέ* (but), *τότε* (then) and the like" (Charles W. Hedrick, "What Is a Gospel? Geography, Time and Narrative Structure," *PRSt* 10 (1983): 256). Similarly, "Within episodes, there are often explicit causal or explanatory or consequential connections, such as 'for,' 'because,' 'therefore,' and 'with the result that.' However, between episodes, the connection is usually a simple 'and,' suggesting a minimal temporal connection." Mark is, therefore, "typical of ancient narrative" in that the plot is presented "as a series of episodes that are only loosely connected, so that the relationship between them is not obvious" (Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 74–75).



εὐθύς that propels the plot at a frenetic pace,<sup>56</sup> the relative absence of teaching material when compared to the other gospels, etc. Another feature that contributes to Mark's "episodic rhythm"<sup>57</sup> is the numerous geographical and spatial notations distributed throughout the story.<sup>58</sup> Yet, even as these recurrent spatial references contribute to the *episodic* nature of the gospel, they also contribute to its overall *cohesiveness and unity*. According to Charles W. Hedrick,

[T]he geographical references and spatial locations, regardless of the occasional problem they pose, constitute the only immediately recognizably over-all narrative structure to an otherwise highly episodic narrative. They provide the only clear structural unity to *all* the individual episodes in Mark 1–13, as well as the sub-groupings of material that Mark has organized.<sup>59</sup>

One might debate Hedrick's claim that geographical and spatial notations constitute the *only clear* structural unity of Mark 1–13; nevertheless, his argument that *all* the individual episodes and sub-groupings in Mark 1–13 are thus organized is justified. I would simply extend his observation to include the episodes of Mark 14–16 as well.<sup>60</sup> Thus, Mark's narrative exhibits an underlying geographical framework that makes it possible for the reader to locate an incident or episode within a relatively specific topographical and/or geopolitical setting.

---

<sup>56</sup> Εὐθύς occurs 41 times in Mark, compared with 5 occurrences in the LXX and 10 in the remaining NT corpus (Matt 5; Luke 1; John 3; Acts 1). Though present throughout Mark, εὐθύς is much more frequent in the opening third of the gospel, with 26 occurrences concentrated within the first six chapters and 15 occurrences distributed throughout the remaining ten chapters. Mark 1, arguably the most episodic segment of Mark's narrative, is saturated with εὐθύς, a total of 11 occurrences within a span of just 34 verses (1:10–43).

<sup>57</sup> Juel, *Master of Surprise*, 33.

<sup>58</sup> For example, Mark 1 contains 11 spatial references within just 10 scenes: in the wilderness (1:4); in the Jordan river (1:5); from Nazareth of Galilee, in the Jordan (1:9); into the wilderness (1:12); to Galilee (1:14); beside the Sea of Galilee (1:16); into Capernaum, into the synagogue (1:21); from the synagogue, into the house of Simon and Andrew (1:29); at the door (1:32); to a deserted place (1:35); into the whole of Galilee, into their synagogues (1:39). Malbon identifies 288 occurrences of elements that function to locate events within the suborders of Markan narrative space (geopolitical, 72; topographical 151; architectural, 65). Malbon, *Narrative Space*, 17, 51, 107.

<sup>59</sup> Hedrick, "What?," 259–60.

<sup>60</sup> Hedrick divides Mark into two major divisions (1–13; 14–16), in accordance with what he sees as Mark's formal narrative literary features of spatial and temporal references. He characterizes Mark 1–13 as an episodic narrative with a geographical framework and Mark 14–16 as a more integrated narrative with a chronological framework. Here, Hedrick offers an important observation regarding the chronological structure of Mark 14–16, yet he gives the impression that the geographical structure of Mark 1–13 has been replaced by a chronological structure in Mark 14–16 ("What?," 256–61). It would be more accurate to say that when the narrative reaches chapter 14, the geographical structuring of episodes continues while a chronological layer has been added. Temporal references are not absent from Mark 1–13, but they do not connect episodes to one another as the temporal references do in Mark 14–16.

One of the ways Mark's underlying geographical framework is manifest in the narrative is via the movements of Jesus and his disciples. In Mark, Jesus' ministry is presented as that of an itinerant preacher and healer. This itinerancy of Jesus' ministry correlates with his vocation as herald of the good news of the kingdom. Following Jesus' first day of public ministry Simon Peter informs Jesus that everyone is searching for him. Jesus responds by saying that it is time to move on to other towns so that he might preach there "for this is the reason I *came out*" (ἐξῆλθον; 1:38). The itinerant nature of Jesus' vocation is also reflected in the apostolic vocation of the Twelve, whom Jesus appoints that they might be with him and also that he might *send* them *out* to preach and to exorcise (ἀποστέλλει; 3:14–15). In Mark, then, Jesus and his disciples are always on the move, rarely remaining in one place for more than one scene or episode at a time. Between episodes the reader finds numerous references to their leaving or withdrawing from one place and their going or coming to another. These itineraries, which describe the movements of Jesus and his disciples, are the principal form Mark's geographical structuring takes, joining episodes together into a unified narrative. In Mark 4:35–8:21, these itineraries take on a distinctive form, that of sea crossings.

#### *The Sea Crossings as the Formal Geographical Structure of Mark 4:35–8:21*

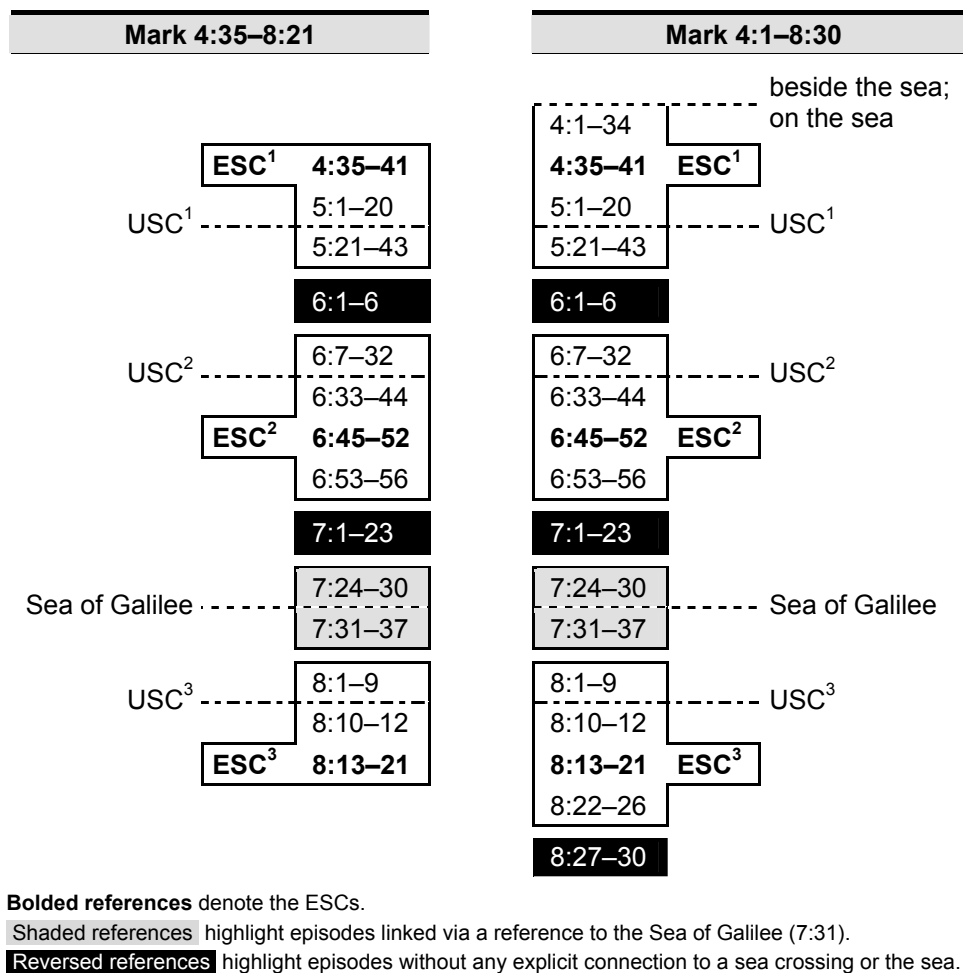
Commentators have repeatedly called attention to the prominent role that the Sea of Galilee and the boat play in the first half of Mark, which will be explored in detail in the following chapter. For now, what is significant is the fact that, although the boat and the sea figure prominently in 1:16–8:21, only in 4:35–8:21 is the boat ever used for the purpose of crossing the sea. Between 4:35 and 8:21, Jesus and his disciples cross the Sea of Galilee six times.<sup>61</sup> As we have had occasion to note, three of these crossings are eventful, or episodic, sea crossings (ESCs); that is, an episode is narrated during the crossing itself.<sup>62</sup> The other three are uneventful sea crossings (USCs); that is, no episodes are narrated during the crossing itself. These crossings consist merely of a statement or two that provides the itinerary of Jesus and his disciples as they move from one place to another using the boat as their means of conveyance.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>61</sup> In this study, *sea crossing* (SC) refers to any boat trip that takes place upon the Sea of Galilee, whether a trip terminates on the opposite side of the sea whence it began (a *full sea crossing*) or on the same side of the sea (a *partial sea crossing*).

<sup>62</sup> The ESCs are 4:35–41 (ESC<sup>1</sup>), 6:45–52 (ESC<sup>2</sup>), and 8:13–21 (ESC<sup>3</sup>).

<sup>63</sup> The USCs are 5:18, 21 (USC<sup>1</sup>); 6:32, 34 (USC<sup>2</sup>), and 8:10 (USC<sup>3</sup>).

Mark 4:35–8:21 consists of 14 separate episodes, including the three ESCs. Of the remaining 11 episodes, 7 are connected to at least one of the sea crossings by being narrated immediately prior to or after an ESC and/or USC (5:1–20; 5:21–43; 6:7–32; 6:33–44; 6:53–56; 8:1–9; 8:10–12). This leaves 4 episodes without a direct connection to a sea crossing (6:1–6; 7:1–23; 7:24–30; 7:31–37). Of these four, 7:24–30 and 7:31–37 are linked via a reference to the Sea of Galilee (7:31). Thus, within Mark 4:35–8:21, 12 of the 14 episodes (or 86%) are associated with one another through a connection with a sea crossing or an explicit reference to the Sea of Galilee. If, for the moment, the whole of the proposed Sea Crossing movement is considered (4:1–8:30), we find that 14 of the 17 episodes (or 82%) are similarly associated (Figure 3–7).



**Figure 3–7: The Sea Crossings as Structuring Devices**

Previously, it was argued that Mark’s gospel exhibits an underlying geographical framework, manifest primarily in the various itineraries that detail the movements of Jesus and his disciples. In 4:35–8:21, we see that the movements of Jesus and his

disciples on and across the Sea of Galilee are the principal means by which the individual episodes are united and structured to form the core of a major narrative movement. Moreover, given the fact that the Markan sea crossings are exclusive to this movement, they contribute to its internal character and so serve to distinguish it from the movements that precede and follow. From this, it does not necessarily follow that the sea crossings are the only feature that both holds this movement together and also distinguishes it from others; for, as we shall see, the Sea Crossing movement exhibits motifs that are either unique to it or are present within it in a concentrated and/or distinct manner. Nevertheless, the sea crossings in general and the ESCs in particular are arguably the most obvious ways in which the movement's episodes are organized. Moreover, as itineraries, they belong to a formal class of structuring devices that establishes a consistent, underlying (and in this case, geographical) structure for the whole of Mark's gospel. In this respect, then, the sea crossings belong to a larger, narrative-wide strategy designed to confer unity upon Mark's episodic narrative.

Beyond their role as itineraries in establishing the underlying geographical framework of Mark 4:35–8:21, the ESCs contribute to the overall structure and unity of the Sea Crossing movement in other ways, both in their intrarelations with one another and in their interrelations with other episodes in the movement.

#### *The Episodic Sea Crossings in Mark 4:35–8:21 — Intrarelations*

##### ESC<sup>1</sup> ≈ ESC<sup>2</sup> ≈ ESC<sup>3</sup>

We begin by highlighting those elements that all three ESCs share in common. In all three ESCs, Jesus and the disciples are the only participants, which is reminiscent of scenes where Jesus and his disciples are alone together, often in a house. Moreover, in each of the ESCs, “the reaction of the disciples constitutes a central facet of the story.”<sup>64</sup> Of course, all three ESCs assume the same general spatial setting: a boat in transit across the Sea of Galilee. Yet, of even greater significance in terms of spatial setting is the fact that all three ESCs are *intended* as full sea crossings to the opposite shore; all embark from the western, Jewish shore of the sea and are *destined* for the eastern, Gentile shore. Here, the qualifiers *intended* and *destined* are important for, as we shall see, ESC<sup>2</sup> both begins and ends on the western, Jewish shore, but only be-

---

<sup>64</sup> Meye, *Jesus and the Twelve*, 65.

cause the boat fails to reach its original, Gentile destination of Bethsaida (cf. 6:45, 53).<sup>65</sup> Finally, one other shared feature, which relates to the overall structure of 4:1–8:30, is that the episodes narrated immediately after each of the ESCs are ones in which Jesus performs healings (5:1–20; 6:53–56; 8:22–26).<sup>66</sup>

### ESC<sup>1</sup> ≈ ESC<sup>2</sup>

The first two ESCs share a number of features vis-à-vis the final ESC.<sup>67</sup> Both have the same temporal setting, “when it became evening” (ὁψίας γενομένης, 4:35; 6:47). In both, the wind and the sea figure prominently and constitute an obstacle to the safety and/or the progress of the boat. In both accounts, following an action of Jesus, the wind ceases (καὶ ἐκόπασεν ὁ ἄνεμος, 4:39; 6:51), eliciting responses of fear and amazement on the part of the disciples (4:41; 6:51). Furthermore, the question of Jesus’ identity combined with the disciples’ incomprehension of that identity are vital elements in both episodes.<sup>68</sup>

### ESC<sup>2</sup> ≈ ESC<sup>3</sup>

In ESC<sup>2</sup>, elements are introduced into the narrative, in addition to those held in common with ESC<sup>1</sup>, which are then paralleled and further developed in ESC<sup>3</sup>. These features are all the more striking given the formal differences between these two episodes;<sup>69</sup> ESC<sup>2</sup> narrates a series of miraculous events, whereas ESC<sup>3</sup> narrates a dialogue between Jesus and his disciples absent anything miraculous. In ESC<sup>2</sup>, the narrator’s explanation for the disciples’ amazement at the abating of the wind (and possibly their failure to recognize Jesus) contains three elements that recur in ESC<sup>3</sup>. In ESC<sup>2</sup>, the narrator states, for the disciples “did not understand about the loaves because their hearts were hardening” (6:52). Similarly, in ESC<sup>3</sup>, when the disciples are discussing that they do not have several loaves (8:16), Jesus responds with, “Do you not yet perceive or understand?<sup>70</sup> Do you have hardened hearts?” (8:17). Moreover, in ESC<sup>2</sup> the reference to *the loaves* recalls the feeding of the five thousand (6:52) whereas the final

<sup>65</sup> The argument that in Mark Bethsaida designates Gentile space will be undertaken in Chapter 5.

<sup>66</sup> This insight is owed to Petersen, “Composition,” 31.

<sup>67</sup> For a synopsis of the similarities between ESC<sup>1</sup> and ESC<sup>2</sup> see, Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8* (AB 27a; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 424–25, 428.

<sup>68</sup> Meye, *Jesus and the Twelve*, 64.

<sup>69</sup> Meye, *Jesus and the Twelve*, 64.

<sup>70</sup> In Chapter 6, I shall argue that the implied complement of the verb in, “Do you not understand?” is the phrase, “about the loaves,” which sharpens the parallel with ESC<sup>2</sup>.

two reference to *the loaves* in ESC<sup>3</sup> recalls both the feedings of the five and the four thousand. In ESC<sup>2</sup>, the disciples, seeing Jesus walking upon the sea, fail to recognize him but mistake him for a ghost (6:49). This finds some parallel in Jesus' question to the disciples in ESC<sup>3</sup>, "Having eyes do you not see?" (8:17). Finally, at the beginning of ESC<sup>2</sup>, Jesus compels his disciples to embark in the boat and head across to Bethsaida (6:45), a destination they fail to reach, landing at Gennesaret instead. Yet, at the conclusion of ESC<sup>3</sup>, Jesus and his disciples disembark at Bethsaida (8:22).<sup>71</sup>

### ESC<sup>1</sup> ≈ ESC<sup>3</sup>

Most of the elements that ESC<sup>1</sup> and ESC<sup>3</sup> hold in common are shared by all three ESCs, but there are a few elements that they share in common vis-à-vis the ESC<sup>2</sup>. Only in ESC<sup>1</sup> and ESC<sup>3</sup> are the disciples given speaking parts. Finally, while all three ESCs are intended as Jewish-to-Gentile sea crossings, only ESC<sup>1</sup> and ESC<sup>3</sup> reach their intended Gentile destinations, which also means that the healings Jesus performs following the crossings are both performed within Gentile geopolitical space and presumably upon Gentile persons. Finally, both episodes conclude with unanswered, rhetorical questions, both of which highlight the disciples' incomprehension regarding Jesus' identity and/or vocation (4:41; 8:21).

### Observations

Having briefly explored the various combinations of ESCs that demonstrate their interrelations, a few concluding observations are in order. First, there are a number of elements, both general and specific, that all the ESCs hold in common, which constitute their fundamental unity. Second, both ESC<sup>1</sup> and ESC<sup>2</sup> exhibit unique parallels as do ESC<sup>2</sup> and ESC<sup>3</sup>, while there are fewer unique parallels between ESC<sup>1</sup> and ESC<sup>3</sup>, which are also less significant thematically. Observations similar to these led Meye to wonder whether "Mark had a unilinear conception of the *three* crossings. Do the three narratives of a sea crossing have a common or interrelated function in the Gospel?"<sup>72</sup>

Meye, himself, answers in the affirmative concluding that the three ESCs all "have an explicitly didactic character in Mark."<sup>73</sup> In support, Meye notes that the

---

<sup>71</sup> Malbon describes ESC<sup>2</sup> as a detoured sea voyage that is finally completed in ESC<sup>3</sup> ("Jesus," 368, 372–73). Stephen H. Smith sees it as an example of Mark's plot suspension tactic ("Bethsaida via Gennesaret: The Enigma of the Sea-Crossing in Mark 6,45–53," *Bib* 77 (1996): 374).

<sup>72</sup> Meye, *Jesus and the Twelve*, 65.

<sup>73</sup> Meye, *Jesus and the Twelve*, 67.

disciples' addressing Jesus as *Teacher* in ESC<sup>1</sup> is "a wholly remarkable form of address in the midst of the storm."<sup>74</sup> Less convincing, however, is his interpreting the disciples' lack of understanding in ESC<sup>2</sup> and ESC<sup>3</sup> as possessing a decidedly "didactic thrust."<sup>75</sup> Even granting the didactic facets of ESC<sup>1</sup> and ESC<sup>3</sup>, Meye overstates the situation. More importantly, his sole focus upon the putative didactic motif misses a number of other interrelated motifs that play out throughout the course of these three ESCs.

Returning to our previous observations (1) that there are some elements common to all three ESCs, (2) that there are some elements common to the first two ESCs and other elements common to the last two ESCs, and (3) that there are only minor elements common to ESC<sup>1</sup> and ESC<sup>3</sup>, these relationships suggest that the three ESCs do have a common or interrelated function in the Gospel but one that is more complex than the one Meye suggests. These observations suggest that one of the ways to best understand the rhetorical relationships that obtain between the three ESCs is to posit a linear progression from ESC<sup>1</sup> through ESC<sup>2</sup> to ESC<sup>3</sup>, where ESC<sup>3</sup> functions as the climax to the whole progression. This linear development is accomplished in a very unique way, namely, via two two-step progressions,<sup>76</sup> the first being from ESC<sup>1</sup> to ESC<sup>2</sup> and the second from ESC<sup>2</sup> to ESC<sup>3</sup>, such that ESC<sup>2</sup> functions as the centerpiece and the transitional element within the internal network of the three ESCs.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, the linear progression does not appear to be *unilinear*, developing along the lines of a single motif (contra Meye), but develops along the lines of multiple motifs, or at least a constellation of motifs, having to do with the boat, the sea, Gentile spaces, the loaves, the identity of Jesus, and the disciples' fear, lack of understanding, and hardness of heart. It will take the rest of the thesis to substantiate the validity of this hypothesis, but it is significant that many of these same recurrent elements that connect the ESCs to one another also connect the ESCs to other episodes within the movement. To these relationships we now turn.

---

<sup>74</sup> Meye, *Jesus and the Twelve*, 66.

<sup>75</sup> Meye, *Jesus and the Twelve*, 67.

<sup>76</sup> For a detailed study of Markan two-step progressions see Frans Neirynck, *Duality in Mark: Contributions to the Study of the Markan Redaction* (BETL 31; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1972); however, the suggestion that the ESCs constitute a double two-step progression is my own.

<sup>77</sup> This double two-step progression is, therefore, different than the progression that obtains between three passion-resurrection predictions in The Way movement, where the linear development occurs more as a three-step progression.

ESC<sup>1</sup>

Commentators often call attention to the parallels between what transpires during the first crossing of the sea and what follows upon their arrival on the other side in 5:1–20.<sup>78</sup> First, both episodes are cast as exorcisms, which is significant given that ESC<sup>1</sup>, which narrates a storm at sea, does not fit naturally into the exorcism typescene, suggesting that the parallels between these episodes are not accidental. In calming the tempestuous sea, Jesus uses language associated with previous exorcisms. Here, the magnitude of Jesus' exorcism of the sea anticipates the magnitude of his exorcism of the Gerasene demoniac, wherein not just a single unclean spirit but a legion of unclean spirits are sent into a herd of pigs and "choked to death in the sea!" (5:13).<sup>79</sup>

Second, the reactions of the third parties to these exorcisms provide another link between ESC<sup>1</sup> and 5:1–20. Those who behold the once-demon-possessed man, clothed and sitting with Jesus in his right mind, are *afraid* (ἐφοβήθησαν, 5:15). Their reaction matches that of the disciples who, beholding the calmness of the once-raging sea, *feared a great fear* (ἐφοβήθησαν φόβον μέγαν, 4:41).<sup>80</sup>

Finally, both episodes are keenly interested in Jesus' identity. ESC<sup>1</sup> concludes with the disciples' rhetorical question, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (4:41), while early on in 5:1–20, the demoniac cries out, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?" (5:6). Here, the demoniac's question is likely intended as an implicit response to the disciples' unanswered question in 4:41. Moreover, in the concluding scene of this episode, the question of Jesus' identity resurfaces in a rhetorically-subtle way, in the contrast between Jesus' instructions to the recovered demoniac and the specific way in which those instructions are (not) carried out. Jesus tells the man to go home to his people and tell them how much the Lord has done for him, but instead the man proclaims in the Decapolis what Jesus had done for him (5:19–20). This implicit identification of *Jesus* with *the Lord* is reminiscent of the Markan prologue where John the Baptist is the Isaianic voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare the way of *the Lord*" (1:3), that is, the way of *Jesus*.

---

<sup>78</sup> Connections between ESC<sup>1</sup> and the immediately preceding episode (4:1–34) are addressed below when establishing the Sea Crossing movement's external boundaries.

<sup>79</sup> Marcus, *Mark* 1–8, 341.

<sup>80</sup> These are the first two occurrences of φοβέω in Mark.



### ESC<sup>2</sup>

ESC<sup>2</sup> exhibits a number of direct narrative associations with episodes throughout 4:35–8:21, especially with respect to the narrator’s concluding comment that the disciples “did not understand about the loaves because their hearts were hardened” (6:52). This highly unexpected reference to *the loaves* recalls the feeding of the five thousand (6:33–44) immediately preceding even as it anticipates Jesus’ debate with the Pharisees (7:1–23) instigated by the disciples eating *the loaves* (7:2) or *the loaf* (7:5) with unwashed hands; Jesus’ interaction with the Syrophenician woman (7:24–30) and their exchange over *the loaf* of the children (7:27); the feeding of the four thousand (8:1–9); and ESC<sup>3</sup>, with its multiple references to *loaf* and *loaves* (8:14ab, 16, 17, 19).

The language of *not understanding* (συνίημι) also recurs in 7:1–23. Here Jesus reproaches the disciples for asking him to explain a parable, saying, “Are you also *without understanding?*” (ἀσύνετοί, 7:18). This reproach echoes the first time the disciples ask Jesus about the parables and he responds with, “Do you not know this parable; then how will you know all the parables?” (4:13), which follows on the heels of the first use of συνίημι (4:12) and which is echoed by the narrator in 6:52. Moreover, as we have noted, ESC<sup>3</sup> is linked also to ESC<sup>2</sup> via references to the disciples’ *not understanding* (8:17, 21). In short, 4:1–34, 7:1–23, ESC<sup>2</sup>, and ESC<sup>3</sup> are all interrelated through references to *the loaves* and the disciples’ failure to *understand*.

### ESC<sup>3</sup>

ESC<sup>3</sup> also exhibits a number of direct narrative associations with episodes throughout 4:35–8:21. First, Jesus’ warning regarding the leaven of the Pharisees recalls the immediately preceding scene where the Pharisees request a sign from Jesus, which he refuses to perform, (8:10–12) as well as his earlier purity debate with the Pharisees (7:1–23). His question about the disciples’ *hardness of heart* (8:17) forges an additional connection with this debate since Jesus, quoting Isaiah 29:13 (LXX), criticizes the Pharisees for having *hearts* that are far from God (7:6). Jesus’ warning regarding the leaven of Herod recalls 6:7–32, with its interpolated account of Herod’s execution of John the Baptist, the only other time Herod is explicitly mentioned in the narrative. Second, the references to the *loaf* and *loaves* in ESC<sup>3</sup> recalls the two feedings (6:33–44; 8:1–9) and also forges links with 7:1–23 and 7:24–30, which were mentioned

previously in connection with ESC<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, the two feedings are explicitly recalled in detail when Jesus questions the disciples concerning the number of baskets of fragments they picked up following each feeding (8:19–20).

Finally, the language of *not understanding* (8:17, 21), as we have already seen, provides a link between ESC<sup>3</sup> and 4:1–34, 7:1–23, and ESC<sup>2</sup>. In addition, the occurrence of auditory and visual perception language (βλέπω, ἀκούω, ὀφθαλμός, οὖς) recalls the healing of the deaf mute (7:31–38) and anticipates the healing of the blind man (8:22–26), two accounts that are remarkably similar in their plot, design, and rhetoric.

### Observations

Having explored the narrative connections between the ESCs and other episodes within 4:35–8:21, we are now in a position to make some observations. First, if the associations that the ESCs have with one another are considered, then of the 14 episodes that comprise 4:35–8:21, all but 2 exhibit direct narrative ties with one or more of the ESCs (5:21–43; 6:1–6). When arguments for the external boundaries of the Sea Crossing movement are presented, we will discover that 4:1–34, 8:22–26, and 8:27–30 all exhibit direct narrative ties to one or more of the ESCs, which means that 15 of the 17 episodes (or 88%) within the Sea Crossing movement demonstrate verbal and thematic correlations with one or more of the ESCs. Second, the verbal and thematic correlations between the ESCs and the other episodes within 4:35–8:21 have to do with exorcisms, the sea, the identity of Jesus, Gentiles and Gentile spaces, the loaves, fear and amazement, lack of understanding and perception, and hardness of heart, and these overlap significantly with those correlations that obtain between the ESCs themselves, as the underlining indicates. In other words, the motifs and other parallels that the ESCs and the non-ESCs share in common are essentially those that the ESCs share in common with one another.

### THE EXTERNAL BOUNDARIES OF MARK 4:1–8:30

#### *Mark 8:22–26*

As we have seen, it has become increasingly common for scholars to include Mark 8:22–26 within The Way movement (8:22–10:52), treating Jesus' two healings of blind men (8:22–26; 10:46–52) as framing devices around the movement. There are,

however, a number of reasons, both structural and thematic, for why 8:22–26 is best understood as belonging to the Sea Crossing movement. In this, I follow Bolt in seeing the blind men episodes not as concentric frames but as “inter-related by way of a linear (not ring) comparison,”<sup>81</sup> with each drawing their respective movements toward closure. At the same time, I acknowledge that a good case can be made for 8:22–26 being transitional and so participating in both movements. Consequently, arguments for including 8:22–26 within The Way movement do not necessarily undermine or contradict its inclusion within the Sea Crossing movement and so need not be addressed here. In short, 8:22–26 belongs to the Sea Crossing movement. It might also belong in The Way movement, but to include it in the latter and not the former is indefensible.

First, while 8:22–26 and 10:46–52 are the only two healings of blind men in Mark and while they share some basic vocabulary (e.g., ἀναβλέπω, τυφλός), the parallels between these healings are nothing compared to the stunning array of parallels in plot elements and sequence, vocabulary, style, thematic content, and rhetorical function that obtain between 8:22–26 and 7:31–37, which is itself firmly rooted within the Sea Crossing movement.<sup>82</sup> In terms of plot, each episode begins with a geographical notation that establishes a Gentile setting in which the healing takes place (7:31; 8:22a). Next, in statements bearing identical syntax, people *bring Jesus* (καὶ φέρουσιν αὐτῷ) someone needing healing, and *beg him* (παρακαλοῦσιν αὐτὸν) *to place his hands on him* (ἵνα ἐπιθῇ αὐτῷ τὴν χεῖρα) or *to touch him* (ἵνα αὐτοῦ ἅψηται) (7:32; 8:22b). In response, Jesus *leads* the deaf-mute away from the crowd (ἀπολαβόμενος, 7:33) and *leads* the blind man out of the village (ἐπιλαβόμενος, 8:23). When the healing itself is enacted, the actions Jesus performs are recounted in far greater detail than anywhere else in the gospel. For example, in both episodes Jesus *spits* (πτύσας) and touches the organ needing restoration (7:33b–34; 8:23b–25a). Each healing ends with an adverb highlighting its success, the deaf-mute now speaks *plainly* (ὁρθῶς, 7:35) and the blind man sees everything *clearly* (τηλαυγῶς, 8:25b), and in each Jesus gives an instruction seemingly designed to keep the healings quiet (7:36a; 8:26).

---

<sup>81</sup> Bolt, *Defeat*, 131.

<sup>82</sup> After making my own observations of the extensive parallels between these two episodes, I came across a similar treatment in Robert M. Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes: The Function of the Feeding Stories in the Gospel of Mark* (SBLDS 54; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1981), 105–12. Fowler makes some additional observations, which I have included here.

Most of the verbal and syntactical parallels have already been highlighted but a few more are worth mentioning. The participle ἀναβλέψας occurs in both episodes, though with different subjects. In the first episode, Jesus *looks up* into the sky (7:34) while, in the second, the blind man *looks up* and sees people walking around (8:24). Some of the verbal parallels come by way of contrast: a deaf man vs. a blind man, ears vs. eyes, and hearing vs. seeing. Interestingly, both episodes employ synonyms for the organs of perception, combining a highly common word with a particularly unusual word. In 7:31–37, the common οὖς and the rare ἀκοή<sup>83</sup> are used for ears, and, in 8:22–26, the common ὀφθαλμός and the rare ὄμμα<sup>84</sup> are used for eyes. There is also something of a chiasm between the two episodes relating to the employment of ἐπιτίθημι and ἅπτω.<sup>85</sup> In 7:31–37, the people beg Jesus to *place his hands upon* the deaf-mute (ἐπιθῇ . . . τὴν χεῖρα, 7:32), but when healing him, Jesus is described as *touching* the man (ἥψατο, 7:33). In 8:22–26, the exact opposite takes place. The people beg Jesus to *touch* the blind man (ἅψεται, 8:22), but then Jesus is described as *placing his hands upon* him (ἐπιθεῖς τὰς χεῖρας, 8:23), not once but twice (ἐπέθηκεν τὰς χεῖρας, 8:25) (Figure 3–8).

Mark 7:32–33	Mark 8:22–23, 25
Καὶ φέρουσιν αὐτῷ κωφὸν καὶ μογιλάλον καὶ παρακαλοῦσιν αὐτὸν <u>ἵνα ἐπιθῇ αὐτῷ τὴν χεῖρα.</u>	Καὶ φέρουσιν αὐτῷ τυφλὸν καὶ παρακαλοῦσιν αὐτὸν <u>ἵνα αὐτοῦ ἅψεται.</u>
καὶ ἀπολαβόμενος αὐτὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄχλου κατ’ ἰδίαν ἔβαλεν τοὺς δακτύλους αὐτοῦ εἰς τὰ ὦτα αὐτοῦ καὶ πτύσας <u>ἥψατο τῆς γλώσσης αὐτοῦ.</u>	καὶ ἐπιλαβόμενος τῆς χειρὸς τοῦ τυφλοῦ ἔξηגעκεν αὐτὸν ἔξω τῆς κόμης καὶ πτύσας εἰς τὰ ὄμματα αὐτοῦ, <u>ἐπιθεῖς τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῷ ἐπηρώτα αὐτόν·</u> . . . εἶτα πάλιν <u>ἐπέθηκεν τὰς χεῖρας</u> <u>ἐπὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ</u>

**Figure 3–8: Chiasm between Mark 7:32–33 and Mark 8:22–23, 25**

Second, the narrative associations between the ESC<sup>3</sup> and the healing of the blind man offer additional support for including 8:22–26 within the Sea Crossing movement. In both episodes, the visual terminology of seeing and eyes is a prominent feature. Moreover, the auditory and visual terminology in ESC<sup>3</sup>, which recalls Mark 4:12 and evokes Isaiah 6:9–10, has obvious ties to both the healings of the deaf-mute

<sup>83</sup> Actually, ἀκοή occurs elsewhere in Mark with the meaning of *news* (1:28; 13:7); but only in 7:35 does it occur with the meaning of *ears*.

<sup>84</sup> ὄμμα is a *hapax legomenon* in biblical literature.

<sup>85</sup> Fowler also notes this “crisscross pattern” (*Loaves and Fishes*, 106).

and the blind man. Together these three episodes serve to highlight the disciples' ever-increasing deafness and blindness. Fowler underscores the absence of the disciples as characters within these two healings, which he notes diverges from their prominence in the other doublets (the first two ESCs and the two feedings). From this Fowler concludes,

We are alerted immediately to the fact that this doublet does not function as a demonstration of the disciples' obtuseness as do the others. Nevertheless, the doublet does provide an indirect commentary on the disciples' lack of perception by exhibiting individuals who *are* able to hear, speak, and see.<sup>86</sup>

Thus, 7:31–37 and 8:22–26 serve as frames around 8:1–21, which throws the disciples' obtuseness into sharp relief producing a devastating critic by Jesus in the final ESC.<sup>87</sup> The unanswered question at the conclusion of ESC<sup>3</sup>, “Do you not yet understand?” (8:21), provides a key transition into Jesus' healing of the blind man, which reinforces the narrative connections between ESC<sup>3</sup> and 8:22–26 and so demonstrates their common rhetorical function.

Third, 8:22–26 takes place in Bethsaida, the original destination of ESC<sup>2</sup>. If this arrival at Bethsaida is the completion of that earlier, failed sea crossing, then we have another significant reason for including 8:22–26 within the Sea Crossing movement. Finally, in terms of narrative structure, the inclusion of 8:22–26 fits the pattern Petersen has identified, wherein an ESC is always followed by an account of Jesus' healing.<sup>88</sup>

#### *Mark 4:1–34*

Scholars generally treat Mark 4:1–34, the parables discourse, as a single compositional unit, though whether it belongs with what precedes or follows or whether it constitutes a major section in its own right is debated. In 4:35–36, which introduces ESC<sup>1</sup>, Jesus says to his disciples, “Let us cross over to the other side,” at which point his disciples “leave *the crowd*” and take Jesus “as he was in *the boat*.” This occurs “*on that day*, when evening had come.” The italicized elements all hark back to 4:1. On *that day* refers to the day that Jesus began teaching in parables; *the crowd* is the one assembled on the seashore listening to Jesus' parables, and *the boat* (πλοῖον) is the

<sup>86</sup> Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes*, 107–8.

<sup>87</sup> Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes*, 108.

<sup>88</sup> Petersen, “Composition,” 31.

one identified in 4:1, which serves as the platform from which Jesus teaches. Earlier in 3:9, Jesus instructed the disciples to procure a boat (πλοῖάριον), but it is not until 4:1 that a boat is put to use on the sea. In short, the references to the boat in 4:1 and 4:36, along with the narrative associations linking 4:1 and 4:35–36, serve to frame the parables discourse, thus drawing it into the Sea Crossing movement.

There are also thematic grounds for assigning 4:1–34 to the Sea Crossing movement. At the heart of the parables discourse is 4:10–12, where Jesus informs his disciples that they have been given the mystery of the kingdom but to those on the outside everything comes in parables, the disparity of which Jesus explains by recourse to Isaiah 6, “so that they may indeed look, but not perceive, and may indeed listen, but not understand” (Mark 4:12; Isa 6:9–10). This language of perception, or rather lack of perception, occurs elsewhere in Mark though most prominently within the episodes of the Sea Crossing movement. The language and images of auditory perception are found in 7:31–37 and ESC<sup>3</sup>, visual perception in ESC<sup>2</sup>, ESC<sup>3</sup>, and 8:22–26; and noetic perception in ESC<sup>2</sup>, 7:1–23, and ESC<sup>3</sup>. Particularly significant is the recurrence of συνίημι (4:12), which, as we shall see, is a key term within Mark’s discourse and which occurs only within the Sea Crossing movement (6:52; 7:14; 8:17, 21), as does its cognate ἀσύνετος (7:18). Moreover, in ESC<sup>3</sup>, Jesus rebukes the disciples employing the same outsider language from Isaiah 6 that was introduced in Mark 4:12, thus forming a significant narrative link between the parables discourse and this climactic ESC. Thus, 4:1–34 is, both structurally and thematically, an integral part of the Sea Crossing movement.

#### *Mark 8:27–30*

Thus far I have made the case for regarding the episodes of 4:1–8:26 as belonging to the same narrative movement, which corresponds to the boundaries proposed by Malbon, Mann, Petersen, Shiner, and Williams (Figure 3–3). Now we are in a position to consider Mark 8:27–30 in relation to the Sea Crossing movement. Some of the reasons for including 8:27–30 are based upon the narrative analyses I carry out in Chapters Five and Six, and so I offer only a few arguments here. Chapter Seven will offer additional support for regarding 8:27–30 as the climactic conclusion to the Sea Crossing movement.

The main reason for including 8:27–30 within the Sea Crossing movement is thematic. In this episode, Jesus initiates a discussion with his disciples that culminates in Peter’s recognition and declaration of Jesus’ messianic identity. Throughout the first half of Mark’s gospel, questions have been raised about Jesus. In Movement 1, the principal issue concerns the nature of his *authority*, which finds expression in the crowds’ reaction to his first public activity, “What is this, a new teaching with authority? He even commands the unclean spirits and they obey him.” (1:27). In Movement 2, the principal issue concerns Jesus’ *identity*, as articulated by the disciples at the conclusion of the first sea crossing, “Who then is this that even the wind and the sea obey him?” (4:41). By remaining unanswered, these questions continue to inhabit the story’s rhetorical space, creating dramatic tension in their respective movements as the reader waits for their resolution, which occurs in each movement’s concluding episode.

At the conclusion of Movement 1, Jesus’ exorcisms once again serve as the occasion for questioning the nature of his authority (3:20–35). Here, Jesus’ opponents attribute his exorcistic abilities to Satan. Jesus, however, in a parabolic response claims that his actions are authorized and animated by God’s Holy Spirit, something the reader has known ever since his baptism but something Jesus’ opponents refuse to acknowledge. Similarly, in the final episode of the Sea Crossing movement, the question of Jesus’ identity is raised once again, this time by Jesus who asks his disciples, “Who are people saying that I am?” (8:27). They respond with, “Some say John the Baptist, and others Elijah, but others one of the prophets” (8:28), which exactly reproduces (albeit in summary fashion) the speculations that were introduced earlier in the movement (6:14–15), which is itself grounds for including 8:27–30 within this movement. Then, Jesus’ asks, “But who do you say that I am?,” to which Peter replies, “You are the Christ” (8:29), something which the reader has known since the first line of the gospel but something Jesus’ own disciples have been at pains to recognize. Now, whether Peter has offered an adequate response to Jesus’ inquiry remains to be seen, for there are scholars who regard Peter’s “confession” as wholly inadequate from the narrative’s ideological point of view, especially given his subsequent rebuke of Jesus in 8:32. Nevertheless, in the narrative, it serves as a response to the question of Jesus’ identity that the disciples posed in 4:41 and that has been present throughout the movement. Moreover, once Peter makes his declaration

a shift takes place in the narrative. From this point on, there are no more references to the loaves, and there is no more mention of the boat or of anyone crossing the sea, despite the fact that they eventually return to Galilee and Capernaum (9:30, 33). Instead, Jesus *begins to teach* his disciples about the necessity of his suffering and death (8:31), a topic which has not been previously broached and whose subsequent recurrence serves as thematic center of gravity for The Way movement. In addition, Jesus speaks this word *plainly*, or *openly*, (παρησίᾳ, 8:32), which contrasts to his speaking the word in *parables* (παραβολαῖς, 4:33) when he *began to teach* at the outset of the Sea Crossing movement (4:1).<sup>89</sup> Therefore, the thematic content of 8:27–30 and the shift that takes place in the narrative between 8:30 and 8:31 suggests that Peter’s declaration of Jesus’ messianic identity serves as the climactic conclusion to the Sea Crossing movement.

### CONCLUSION

The above analysis of Mark 4–8 has identified a major narrative movement that extends from 4:1 to 8:30. It has an underlying geographical framework, which is formed primarily by the numerous sea crossings that transport Jesus and his disciples back and forth between Jewish and Gentile geopolitical spaces, thus the designation *the Sea Crossing movement*. In particular, the ESCs serve as the centripetal and centrifugal hubs within a network of verbal and thematic narrative associations, the narrative centerpieces around which the other episodes of the movement are organized and through which the movement’s plot and the central motifs develop and flow.

---

<sup>89</sup> The expression ἤρξατο διδάσκειν does not, in and of itself, signify the beginning of a narrative movement in Mark, as its employment in 6:34 indicates (cf. 6:2), but in 4:1–2 and 8:31 it seems to be one of the elements signaling the beginning of a new narrative movement.



## CHAPTER FOUR

# THE LITERARY MOTIF



Chapters Five and Six involve establishing the presence of two Markan motifs central to the Sea Crossing movement—the Sea Crossing motif and The Loaves motif.<sup>1</sup> Their establishment serves two purposes. First, it contributes to my previous argument that Mark 4:1–8:30 comprises a major narrative movement by demonstrating that these motifs are either exclusive to 4:1–8:30 or present in such a concentrated and/or distinct manner so as to give definition to this portion of the narrative, setting it in relief from what precedes or follows. Second, their establishment forms the foundation for my narrative reading of 4:1–8:30, which is guided by how these two motifs interweave throughout the Sea Crossing movement and especially by how they intersect and interact in the three ESCs. This chapter anticipates the next two by providing a definition of the literary motif and by describing the method for establishing the presence and extent of the Sea Crossing and The Loaves motifs in Mark.

### THE LITERARY MOTIF — DEFINED

According to William Freedman, *motif* is “a common but often vaguely defined critical term.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, I begin by offering a discussion and a working definition of the literary motif. What follows is not so much a critique of how others use the term motif as

---

<sup>1</sup> Originally, a chapter devoted to the Perception motif was planned, but space prohibited its inclusion. Consequently, the contributions that the Perception motif makes to the Sea Crossing movement will be incorporated into the narrative reading that is presented in Chapter Seven.

<sup>2</sup> William Freedman, “The Literary Motif: A Definition and Evaluation,” in *Essentials of the Theory of Fiction* (ed. Michael J. Hoffman and Patrick D. Murphy; 2d. ed.; Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996), 200.

it is a clarification of the concept of motif operative in this study. First, I make a distinction between *motif* and *theme*, terms that are often used interchangeably. A *motif* is “a theme, character type, image, metaphor, or other verbal element that recurs throughout a single work of literature or occurs in a number of different works over a period of time.”<sup>3</sup> A *theme* is “the main point of a work of literature,”<sup>4</sup> “a general concept or doctrine, whether implicit or asserted, which an imaginative work is designed to incorporate and make persuasive to the reader.”<sup>5</sup> In reference to a single work, “the theme comprehends the entire literary work” whereas “a motif is more limited and less comprehensive of the entire story.”<sup>6</sup> In Mark, for example, the difficulty of discipleship is an overarching theme, whereas the disciples’ recurring incomprehension is a motif, and in this case, a motif that contributes to the theme of the difficulty of discipleship. Thus, while the concepts of motif and theme are related, they are ultimately distinguished by recurrence, a property essential to a motif but not to a theme.

Yet, recurrence alone does not constitute a motif.<sup>7</sup> According to Freedman, a literary motif must exhibit both frequency of recurrence and avoidability.

A motif . . . is a recurrent theme, character, or verbal pattern, but it also may be a family or associational cluster of literal or figurative references to a given class of concepts or objects, whether it be animals, machines, circles, music, or whatever. It is generally symbolic—that is, it can be seen to carry a meaning beyond the literal one immediately apparent; it represents on the verbal level something characteristic of the structure of the work, the events, the characters, the emotional effects or the moral or cognitive content. It is presented both as an object of description and, more often, as part of the narrator’s imagery and descriptive vocabulary. And it indispensably requires a certain minimal frequency of recurrence and improbability of appearance in order both to make itself at least subconsciously felt and to indicate its purposefulness. Finally, the motif achieves its power by an appropriate regulation of that frequency and improbability, by its appearance in significant contexts, by the degree to which the individual instances work together

---

<sup>3</sup> “Glossary of Literary Terms,” n.p. [cited 16 May 2006]. Online: [http://www.galegroup.com/free\\_resources/glossary/glossary\\_im.htm#m](http://www.galegroup.com/free_resources/glossary/glossary_im.htm#m).

<sup>4</sup> “Glossary of Literary Terms,” n.p. [cited 16 May 2006]. Online: [http://www.galegroup.com/free\\_resources/glossary/glossary\\_im.htm#t](http://www.galegroup.com/free_resources/glossary/glossary_im.htm#t).

<sup>5</sup> M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (6th ed.; Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1993), 121.

<sup>6</sup> Catherine M. Murphy, “Glossary,” n.p. [cited 16 May 2006]. Online: <http://www-relg-studies.scu.edu/facstaff/murphy/courses/sctr102/glossary.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> Here I am concerned with motifs that occur within a single literary work.

toward a common end or ends and, when it is symbolic, by its appropriateness to the symbolic purpose or purposes it serves.<sup>8</sup>

Freedman's description contains a number of important insights. First, a motif is not limited to the repetition of a single word or phrase but may take the form of a verbal pattern comprised of a constellation or family of related words or phrases, what Kenneth Burke terms an "associational cluster."<sup>9</sup> Second, an associational cluster may be comprised of both literal and metaphorical elements. In fact, even when a motif as a whole functions symbolically in a work, some or even all of its individual members may function literally. Third, a literary motif contributes to at least one of a narrative's principle dimensions, be it its cognitive, affective, or structural dimension.<sup>10</sup> A motif's ability to contribute to the structural dimension of a narrative is particularly relevant to my argument that certain Markan motifs help define Mark 4:1–8:30 as a major narrative movement.

Perhaps Freedman's most significant contribution is his discussion of two criteria he regards as indispensable for the identification, or establishment, of a motif in a literary work, namely, the criteria of frequency and avoidability. First, with respect to frequency, Freedman readily acknowledges that there could never be a set minimum number of references a motif must exhibit to be qualified as such. Nevertheless, "members of the family of references should occur often enough to indicate that purposiveness rather than merely coincidence or necessity is at least occasionally responsible for their presence."<sup>11</sup> The second criterion concerns "the avoidability and unlikelihood of the particular uses of a motif, or of its appearance in certain contexts, or of its appearance at all."<sup>12</sup> In other words, if neither the subject matter nor context *demands* a recurrent element, the recurrent element's presence likely indicates a motif. To use Freedman's illustration, references to hats are unavoidable in a novel about a milliner. On the other hand, the criterion of avoidability does not rule out *a priori* the possibility that repeated references to hats might indeed constitute a motif;

---

<sup>8</sup> Freedman, "Literary Motif," 206–7.

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (3d ed.; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 20, 77.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Vernon K. Robbins' discussions regarding the repetitive and progressive textures of a text's "inner texture" in *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1996), 7–14 and in *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1996), 46–50.

<sup>11</sup> Freedman, "Literary Motif," 204.

<sup>12</sup> Freedman, "Literary Motif," 204.

it simply suggests that one exercise an appropriate level of caution and discernment. Clearly, evaluating the frequency and avoidability of recurrent elements remains a matter of judgment, and any arguments regarding the presence or absence of a motif are open to critique. Nevertheless, these criteria provide a viable starting point for establishing the existence of a literary motif.

Freedman also outlines five criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of a motif in a literary work. I mention these not so much because I intend to evaluate the effectiveness of Markan motifs but because they prove helpful as ancillary criteria for the identification of members of a motif's associational cluster. The first and second criteria are familiar; the efficacy of a motif is directly proportional to its (1) frequency and (2) avoidability. The greater the frequency with which instances of a motif recur and the more unlikely those instances are in a given context, the deeper the impression they are likely to exercise upon the reader, within certain limits.<sup>13</sup> (3) The third criterion concerns the significance of the contexts in which a motif occurs. A motif is more likely to be effective when it recurs in central and/or climactic passages in a work. (4) The fourth criterion concerns the degree to which all instances of a motif are relevant to the principal end of the motif as a whole and the degree to which they fit together into a recognizable and coherent unit. A motif's effectiveness increases when there is a close association between individual members of the cluster because their close relationship gives the motif greater unity and focus. (5) The fifth criterion concerns the appropriateness of the motif to what it symbolizes. As we shall see, Mark's Sea Crossing motif, wherein Jesus crosses a topographical boundary separating two distinct geopolitical spaces, is quite appropriate as a symbol for Jews who must cross cultural and ethnic boundaries in order to fulfill their mission to the Gentiles.

### **LITERARY MOTIFS IN MARK — THEIR ESTABLISHMENT**

Mark's gospel being highly episodic, our goal is to discover which episodes serve as the principal carriers of any one of his given motifs. The establishment of a Markan motif takes place in three stages: demonstrating the presence of a motif in the narrative, constructing the motif's associational cluster, and identifying the motif's princi-

---

<sup>13</sup> "There would seem to be a law of diminishing returns here, the efficacy of the motif beginning to decline at the point where unlikelihood begins to shade into unsuitability or frequency into tedious repetition. Maximum power will therefore probably be achieved at the degree of frequency and improbability just short of this negative tendency, a point that varies from work to work" (Freedman, "Literary Motif," 205).

pal carriers. Chapters Five and Six, where we establish and analyze the Sea Crossing and The Loaves motifs, present these stages in detail. What follows here is a description of the process, an overview and a clarification of the method being employed.

#### STAGE ONE — DEMONSTRATING THE PRESENCE OF A MOTIF

The first stage is concerned with demonstrating the presence of a literary motif in Mark. In this stage, an element (or element) that recurs in the narrative is shown to satisfy Freedman's criteria of frequency and avoidability, thereby substantiating the presence of a motif within the Markan narrative. In turn, the recurrent element or elements serve as the motif's inner core, its nucleus or the center of gravity that orients the motif's associational cluster and holds its members together.

#### STAGE TWO — CONSTRUCTING THE ASSOCIATIONAL CLUSTER

The second stage is concerned with constructing a motif's associational cluster, the network of words and phrases that are interrelated and associated via the narrative's discourse. As Burke notes, "the work of every writer contains a set of implicit equations. He uses 'associational clusters.' And you may by examining his work, find 'what goes with what' in these clusters."<sup>14</sup> In this study, a motif's associational cluster comprises all the individual elements that participate in and contribute to the motif. The construction of a motif's associational cluster occurs in two phases.

In the first phase, a "Database of Candidates" is compiled. Included in the database are the inner core element (or elements) from Stage One along with any other elements in the narrative that potentially belong to the motif through some association with the core element or elements, be it semantic, grammatical, or narrational. For example, when constructing The Loaves motif database, I include all of the verbs where one of its required arguments is instantiated by ἄρτος, which constitutes the inner core of The Loaves motif. In this example, ἐσθίω, λαμβάνω, and συνίημι (among others) are identified, and every occurrence is included in the database, even where an association with ἄρτος is lacking. The database is presented visually in a two-dimensional table, with the horizontal axis representing individual Markan episodes and the vertical axis the lexemes that have been identified as candidates for the motif (see Appendix B).

---

<sup>14</sup> Burke, *Literary Form*, 20.

The second phase evaluates each occurrence of a candidate to determine whether it ultimately participates in the motif. Occurrences judged as not contributing to the motif are removed from the database, and those remaining constitute the motif's "Associational Cluster," which is presented in a second table (see Appendix B). To determine whether an occurrence of a word belongs to the motif's associational cluster, I have developed a number of criteria, which are all grounded in the same basic assumption: the probability that a given occurrence of a word is a carrier of a motif is directly proportional (1) to the number of times it occurs in narrative association with the motif's core element and other elements of the associational cluster and (2) to the number of different episodes in which it occurs in association with these motif elements.

As we shall see, with some candidates, every occurrence appears in narrative association with the core and/or other cluster elements such that all occurrences of the word are naturally included in the motif's associational cluster. Many candidates, however, do not meet this criterion of exclusive association and so must be appraised differently. Originally, I developed a criterion based upon proportion of association such that, when more than one-half—or two-thirds, or three-quarters (I experimented with different ratios)—of a candidate's total occurrences appeared in narrative conjunction with the core and/or other cluster elements, then all occurrences of the candidate were included in the associational cluster, the assumption being, that through repeated association with other members of the motif, a word could become a carrier of the motif and so evoke the motif in episodes in which it occurred absent these explicit associations. If a candidate failed this criterion, then none of its occurrences were included in the associational cluster.

But this statistical approach produced various anomalies and inconsistencies, prompting the need for better criteria. For example, when constructing The Loaves associational cluster, δώδεκα and ἑπτὰ were selected as candidates, as both are used to indicate the number of baskets of leftover loaves. Yet, only ἑπτὰ made it into the associational cluster, since five of its eight uses occurred in conjunction with ἄρτος, compared to just two of δώδεκα's fifteen occurrences. Both numbers, however, are clearly important members of The Loaves motif, given that they both recur in ESC<sup>3</sup> in recollection of the two Markan feedings, and so to include one without the other would be highly problematic. Then again, if both δώδεκα and ἑπτὰ should be in-

cluded in The Loaves associational cluster, are all of their occurrences to be included, or just some occurrences, and upon what basis? These issues and questions led me to develop two constructs: narrative grammars and microclusters.

A *narrative grammar* comprises words that serve in the same basic role in the narrative. In this case, δώδεκα and ἑπτὰ, along with five other words, belong to the QUANTITY narrative grammar, constituted by all the words that indicate the number of loaves, fish, and baskets in the feedings. The assumption is that δώδεκα and ἑπτὰ are carriers of The Loaves motif only when serving in their capacity as members of QUANTITY. A *microcluster* comprises words that recur in association with one another throughout the narrative. As its name implies, a microcluster is essentially a mini associational cluster. An example is the HOST microcluster, which refers to the sequence of actions performed by the Jewish head of household to commence a meal or a banquet (e.g., λαμβάνω, κλάω, εὐλογέω, δίδωμι) and which is invoked on three separate occasions in Mark. Again, the assumption is that these words are carriers of The Loaves motif only when they serve as members of HOST. According to these two criteria, only the particular instances of words that participate in a narrative grammar or a microcluster are included in a motif's associational cluster.

### STAGE THREE — IDENTIFYING THE PRINCIPAL CARRIERS

The final stage identifies the episodes that show signs of being principal carriers of the motif. A relatively high concentration of individual members of the associational cluster within an episode identifies it as a principal carrier of the motif. Yet again, statistics alone is not the only means of evaluation. Other factors are considered with the result that some episodes with a low concentration of associational cluster elements are ultimately regarded as principal carriers of the motif.

*A Note on Cluster Criticism.* After having developed the above method and procedures for establishing the existence and contours of literary motifs in Mark, I stumbled across Cluster Criticism, which is a method of rhetorical analysis developed by Burke to assist critics in discovering a rhetor's worldview within a given artifact. "Cluster analysis involves three basic steps: (1) identifying key terms in the artifact; (2) charting the terms that cluster around the key terms; and (3) discovering an explanation for the artifact."<sup>15</sup> These steps roughly correspond to those outlined above,

---

<sup>15</sup> Sonja K. Foss, "Cluster Criticism," in *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice* (3d. ed.; Long Grove, Ill.: Waveland, 2004), 72.

revealing significant correspondence between the two methods. A basic difference between the methods, however, is that in Cluster Criticism the concern is with exploring and explaining dimensions of a rhetor's worldview, whereas my concern is with exploring and explaining dimensions of the implied author's narrative logic.

#### LITERARY MOTIFS IN MARK — RATIONALE FOR THE METHOD

The motifs this study seeks to establish have not gone unnoticed in previous Markan scholarship. Even when the term *motif* has not been used, the phenomena that point to their presence have been recognized and discussed by commentators. Given that the existence of these motifs in Mark has not been contested, one might well wonder about the value of allocating so much space to establishing their presence. This issue is brought into sharper relief by studies like Timothy Dwyer's on Mark's motif of wonder. Dwyer explores "the narrative elements which express astonishment, fear, terror, and amazement,"<sup>16</sup> looking at the thirty-two occurrences of this motif distributed throughout the narrative. Interestingly, Dwyer makes use of Freedman's two criteria for establishing a motif and his five criteria for evaluating its effectiveness, yet his discussion of Freedman and his application of Freedman's criteria comprise less than two pages of his two-hundred-page monograph.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, apart from a brief appeal to Gerd Theissen's definition of wonder<sup>18</sup> and a brief discussion in dialogue with Rudolph Pesch concerning the number of occurrences of this motif in Mark,<sup>19</sup> Dwyer does not engage in a defense of which individual elements constitute Mark's motif of wonder. Presumably, he considered such a defense unnecessary, perhaps because there is general agreement regarding the phenomena to be investigated. I note these aspects of Dwyer's study not to criticize it but simply to highlight some basic differences in our approach and presentation. Though we are both engaged in a narrative-critical analysis of Markan motifs and both indebted to Freedman's insights on the literary motif, our studies differ with respect to the space we devote to establishing our respective motifs. The following comments, therefore, offer the rationale be-

---

<sup>16</sup> Timothy Dwyer, *The Motif of Wonder in the Gospel of Mark* (JSNTSup 128; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 11.

<sup>17</sup> Dwyer, *Motif of Wonder*, 18–19.

<sup>18</sup> Dwyer, *Motif of Wonder*, 11; Gerd Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of Early Christian Tradition* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1983), 69–71.

<sup>19</sup> Dwyer, *Motif of Wonder*, 11–12; Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium* (2 vols.; HTKNT 2; Freiburg: Herder, 1976–1977), 150–52.



hind my method of establishing Markan motifs as well as why I present their establishment in such detail.

First, Freedman's definition and analysis of the literary motif provides the conceptual and critical tools for confirming (or contesting) the existence of motifs in Mark that scholars have, on the whole, only intuited. Freedman's criteria establishes a more objective basis for discussing and assessing different proposals, thus providing greater clarity and methodological precision to the study of literary motifs in Mark. In this regard, Freedman's most beneficial contribution is his criterion of avoidability. That is, when commentators assert the presence of a particular motif in Mark, they almost invariably make an appeal to the frequency of certain words or word clusters. Yet, as Freedman demonstrates, recurrence is not an adequate basis for the establishment of a literary motif. For example, recurrence alone does not explain why scholars accurately discern the presence of a bread motif in Mark but not in Matthew; this is significant given that Matthew not only appropriates approximately 90 percent of Mark's narrative but also manifests the same number of occurrences of ἄρτος.

So, what is it about the nature of Mark's twenty-one occurrences of ἄρτος such that it functions as the foundation of a motif while Matthew's twenty-one occurrences of ἄρτος do not? Granted, Matthew is roughly 65 percent longer than Mark, but the recurrence of ἄρτος in Matthew would still satisfy the criterion of frequency. In the end, what distinguishes the role of ἄρτος in Mark and Matthew is its avoidability for, by and large, the occurrences of ἄρτος in Matthew lack avoidability whereas in Mark there exist a number of demonstrably avoidable occurrences of ἄρτος. In fact, it is primarily the avoidable uses of ἄρτος in Mark that have been eliminated from (Mark 6:8, 52; 7:2 // Matt 10:9–10; 14:33; 15:1) or modified in (Mark 7:5 // Matt 15:2) Matthew, the end result of these redactions being that The Loaves motif in Mark is no longer discernible in Matthew.

Second, establishing a motif through the construction of its associational cluster is consistent with the linguistic theories operative in this study, especially Construction Grammar's insight that words have, acquire, and evoke meaning through association with other words in semantic and/or narrative frames. Third, some episodes that have been identified as major carriers of a given motif would have been overlooked had the process been limited to just a few key elements.

Finally, as I have engaged in the process of establishing motifs in the Markan narrative, and especially as I have gone about constructing their respective associational clusters, I have become increasingly aware of the subjective nature of my approach. While Freedman's criteria offer some guidance and controls, they still require a number of subjective judgments. While my method in no way compares to the stringency of the method John Dominic Crossan proposes for constructing a database of historically-reliable Jesus tradition, his reflections on the subjective nature of his approach is constructive.

It is clear, I hope, that my methodology does not claim a spurious objectivity, because almost every step demands a scholarly judgment and an informed decision. I am concerned, not with an unattainable objectivity, but with an attainable honesty. My challenge to my colleagues is to accept those formal moves or, if they reject them, to replace them with better ones. They are, of course, only *formal* moves, which then demand a *material* investment. Different scholars might invest those formal moves with widely divergent sources and texts, but historical Jesus research would at least have some common methodology instead of a rush to conclusion that could then be only accepted or denied.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, part of my rationale presenting the establishment of the Sea Crossing and The Loaves motifs in such detail is to afford reviewers the opportunity to follow my work and see the basis for my decisions, putting them in a better position to assess the soundness and strength of my arguments and conclusions.

---

<sup>20</sup> John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), xxxiv.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# THE SEA CROSSING MOTIF



The first motif to be analyzed is the Sea Crossing motif, which is oriented around the recurrence of *θάλασσα* and *πλοῖον*. Scholars have long recognized the numerous references to the sea and the boat in Mark and their concentration in Mark 3–8. Much of the debate has been carried on by redaction critics interested in establishing which references to the sea and, in particular, to the boat are pre-Markan and which are redactional.<sup>1</sup> Few have attempted to analyze these motifs from a narrative-critical standpoint.<sup>2</sup>

Given the particular pattern of recurrence that *θάλασσα* and *πλοῖον* (and the other associated elements) exhibit in Mark, one could characterize the Sea Crossing motif either (1) as an intersection of Boat and Sea motifs that is exclusive to Movement 2 or (2) as a motif that is primarily featured in Movement 2, yet foreshadowed and anticipated in Movement 1. Ultimately, the differences for interpretation between (1) and (2) are negligible, and this study's preference for (2) is simply a matter of how best to present the fact that, while *θάλασσα* and *πλοῖον* recur throughout 1:9–8:30, they unite to perform a distinctive function in 4:1–8:30, as we saw in Chapter Three. I shall, therefore, generally speak in terms of the Sea Crossing motif, and rarely speak of Boat and Sea motifs. That being said, I shall argue for the fre-

---

<sup>1</sup> Achtemeier, "Toward," 265–91; idem, "Origin," 198–221; Hegermann, Harald. "Bethsaida und Gennesar: Eine traditions- und redaktionsgeschichtliche Studie zu Mc 4–8." Pages 130–40 in *Judentum, Urchristentum, Kirche: Festschrift für Joachim Jeremias*. Walther Eltester. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 26. Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1960.

<sup>2</sup> Notable exceptions are Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes*, 57–68. Kelber, *Kingdom*, 45–65; Malbon, "Jesus," 363–77; Petersen, "Composition," 185–217.

quency and avoidability of θάλασσα and πλοῖον in two separate discussions but then move to single discussion when constructing the Sea Crossing motif associational cluster.

## ESTABLISHING THE SEA CROSSING MOTIF

### THE FREQUENCY AND AVOIDABILITY OF ΘΑΛΑΣΣΑ

#### THE FREQUENCY OF ΘΑΛΑΣΣΑ

In Mark, θάλασσα occurs 19 times within 11 episodes. Out of 1,319 lemmas in Mark, θάλασσα ranks 82nd in terms of frequency, locating it in the 93rd percentile and making it one of the most frequently occurring words in the entire gospel. These figures are even more impressive when considering that nearly half of the words that occur more frequently than θάλασσα in Mark are words that occur frequently in all texts (e.g. prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions, and particles). As a noun, θάλασσα ranks 15th out of 437 common nouns (the 96th percentile). Additionally, 13 of its 17 non-metaphorical occurrences appear in Mark 4:1–8:30, making it the 6th most frequently occurring common noun (out of 206) in the Sea Crossing movement (the 97th percentile).<sup>3</sup>

The only other NT writing in which θάλασσα occurs more times than in Mark is Revelation with 26 occurrences. Of the gospels, Matthew comes closest with 16 occurrences in 12 episodes although, when the respective lengths of Matthew and Mark are taken into account, θάλασσα's frequency of recurrence in Mark is nearly double that in Matthew. In John, θάλασσα occurs 9 times in 4 episodes, while in Luke just 3 times in 2 episodes (Figure 5–1).<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Only ἄρτος, ὄχλος, ἄνθρωπος, μαθητής, and πλοῖον occur more frequently.

<sup>4</sup> The infrequency of θάλασσα in Luke is interesting given Luke's dependency upon Mark. This is, in part, due to Luke's preference for λίμνη in reference to the same body of water Mark identifies as a θάλασσα. It is also due to the *Great(er) Omission*, a continuous segment of Mark's narrative, namely 6:45–8:26, that is entirely absent from Luke's (between 9:17 and 9:18), despite Luke's adopting Mark's order of events from Luke 8:4 to 9:50. For a brief survey of attempts to explain the absence of Mark 6:45–8:26 from Luke, see Darrell L. Bock, *Luke* (2 vols.; BECNT 3; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 1:950–51. Lennart Persson suggests that Luke made use of an earlier edition of Mark that did not contain 7:1–8:26, such that Luke's "Greater Omission" is better understood as "The Markan Interpolation" ("The Gentile Mission in the Markan Interpolation (Mark 7:1–8:26)," *BTF* 12 (1980): 44–49).

	Occurrences of θάλασσα	Total Number of Words in Book	Frequency of Recurrence
<b>Revelation</b>	26	9,851	2.64
<b>Mark</b>	19	11,133	1.71
<b>Matthew</b>	16	18,634	.87
<b>John</b>	9	15,635	.58
<b>Acts</b>	10	18,450	.54
<b>Luke</b>	3	19,482	.15

Frequency of recurrence is the ratio of the total number of occurrences of a given word in a book to the total number of words within that book, and the ratio is given as the number of occurrences per thousand words (e.g., in Revelation θάλασσα occurs 2.64 times per thousand words on average. • Not included in this table are writings in which θάλασσα occurs only once (Rom; 2Cor; James; Jude) or twice (1Cor; Heb).

**Figure 5–1: Frequency of Recurrence of θάλασσα in the New Testament**

This data reveals that the frequency of recurrence of θάλασσα in Mark is high in comparison with both its recurrence in other NT writings and, more importantly for our purposes, the recurrence of other words within the Markan narrative. This level of recurrence satisfies Freedman’s criterion of frequency, making θάλασσα a candidate for the foundation of a literary motif.

#### THE AVOIDABILITY OF ΘΑΛΑΣΣΑ

In Mark, ἡ θάλασσα τῆς Γαλιλαίας designates a large expanse of water in northern Palestine. Mark is our earliest source (written or otherwise) that employs this particular designation for this body of water.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, all subsequent occurrences of *the Sea of Galilee* in ancient literature ultimately derive, either directly or indirectly, from Mark, and so, “Mark’s naming is not without importance.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, I begin my inquiry into the avoidability of θάλασσα in Mark, first by considering Mark’s unprecedented identification of this body of water as τῆς Γαλιλαίας, and the second by considering his designating it a θάλασσα.

#### *The Sea of Galilee*

In antiquity, this body of water is identified by employing one of three geopolitical designations: Gennesaret, Tiberias, and Galilee.

*Gennesaret.* Prior to the second century C.E., the most common and widespread designation for this body of water was *Gennesaret*, whose orthography exhibits

<sup>5</sup> K. W. Clark, “Sea of Galilee,” *IDB* 2:348. A search of the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae ([www.tlg.uci.edu](http://www.tlg.uci.edu)) confirms Clark’s observations.

<sup>6</sup> Malbon, “Jesus,” 364.

some variation across the literature. The earliest references to this body of water are in the OT where it shares its name with a town and/or region located on its western shore,<sup>7</sup> either *the Sea of Kinnereth* (יַם־כִּנְרֶת; Num 34:11; Josh 13:27) or *the Sea of Kinneroth* (יַם כִּנְרוֹת; Josh 12:3). In the LXX, these appear as *the Sea of Chenereth* (ὁ θάλασσα Χενερεθ; Josh 12:3; 13:27) and *the Sea of Chenera* (ὁ θάλασσα Χενερα; Num 34:11). In 1 Maccabees 11:67, it is called *the water of Gennesar* (τὸ ὕδωρ τοῦ Γεννησαρ).<sup>8</sup> In his *Geography*, the Greek historian, geographer, and philosopher Strabo (ca. 64 B.C.E. – 24 C.E.) highlights certain features of *Lake Gennesaritis* (λίμνη Γεννησαρίτις; 16:2:16.); while the Jewish historian Josephus (ca. 37–100 C.E.) generally refers to it as *the Lake of Gennesar* (λίμνη Γεννησαρ; *Ant.* 5:84; 18:28, 36; *J.W.* 2:573; 3:463, 506; 3:315–316; *Life* 1:349.), the name which, he says, is the one given to it by rural inhabitants and derived from the name of the adjoining territory (*J.W.* 3:57, 463.). Luke is the only NT writing to refer to it as *the Lake of Gennesaret* (ἡ λίμνη Γεννησαρέτ; 5:1). The Roman scholar Pliny the Elder (ca. 23–79 C.E.) acknowledges that many writers call this lake (*lacus*) *Genesara* (*Genesaram*), but adds that many (locals?) call it *Tarichea* after the name of that town (*Nat.* 5:15:71).<sup>9</sup> After the first century, *Gennesaret*, as a designation for this body of water, disappears from all non-Christian literature, and its presence in Christian literature is owed entirely to Luke 5:1.<sup>10</sup>

*Tiberias*. Near the end of the first century, *Tiberias* (Τιβεριάς/Τιβεριεύς, *Tiberius*) emerges as the new geopolitical designation for this body of water, and by the beginning of the second century has replaced *Gennesaret* in all the literature, be it, Christian, Jewish, or secular.<sup>11</sup> For example, *the Lake of Tiberias* is the designation employed in the Talmud.<sup>12</sup> The emergence of *Tiberias* as a designation for this body of water is represented in John and in Josephus' *Jewish War*, where it occurs alongside older designations. In John 6:1, the overloaded genitive phrase, τῆς θαλάσσης τῆς Γαλιλαίας τῆς Τιβεριάδος, is probably to be read, “the Sea of Galilee, that is, the Sea of Tiberias,” a reading confirmed by the fact that *the Sea of Galilee* never recurs in

<sup>7</sup> Num 34:11; Deut 3:17; Josh 11:2; 12:3; 13:27; 19:35; 1 Kgs 15:20.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Josephus' singular reference to *the waters of Genesar* (τῶν ὑδάτων τῶν Γενησάρων; *Ant.* 13:158).

<sup>9</sup> Seán Freyne, “Sea of Galilee,” *ABD* 2:900.

<sup>10</sup> Gerd Theissen, “Meer’ und See’ in den Evangelien: Ein Beitrag zur Lokalkoloritforschung,” *SNTSU* 10 (1985): 12.

<sup>11</sup> Except, of course, for those places in Christian literature where the occurrence of *the Sea of Galilee* or *the Lake of Gennesaret* directly depends upon the gospels.

<sup>12</sup> Theissen, “Meer’ und See’,” 15.

John, only *the Sea of Tiberias* (21:1). Josephus normally speaks of *the Lake of Genesareth*, yet he twice calls it *the Lake of Tiberias* (Τιβεριάδα λίμνης; J.W. 3:57, 4:456).

*Galilee*. Finally, this body of water is also identified as *the Sea of Galilee* (ἡ θάλασσα τῆς Γαλιλαίας), a designation, which in biblical literature occurs only in the gospels, in Matthew, Mark, and John, but not Luke.<sup>13</sup> While John prefers the geopolitical designation, *the Sea of Tiberias*, Matthew and Mark use *the Sea of Galilee* exclusively. Outside the NT, *the Sea of Galilee* appears only in Christian literature, and is always dependent, directly or indirectly, upon the canonical gospels. In other words, *the Sea of Galilee* never appears in Jewish or secular literature.

From this data, we can make two important observations that contribute to our understanding of Markan usage. First, in literature that predates and postdates Mark, this body of water is consistently and primarily known by the same geopolitical designation, *Gennesaret*. Yet, by the early second century, the Latin *Tiberias* has supplanted the Semitic *Gennesaret* as the geopolitical designation for this body of water. This shift in usage within the literature more likely reflects, rather than instigates, a shift in usage among local residents, and is due to the increasing prominence of the city of Tiberias resulting from the Roman-urbanization of Palestine.<sup>14</sup> Second, the evidence clearly indicates that the designations, *Gennesaret* and *Tiberias*, represent the actual, everyday usage of local residents of Palestine. Yet, the designation, *Galilee*, remains a mystery given that it only ever appears in Christian literature. What, then, is the origin of τῆς Γαλιλαίας as applied to this body of water?

Gerd Theissen offers a way forward in answering this question, noting that the construction, ἡ θάλασσα τῆς Γαλιλαίας, corresponds to neither Greek nor Latin usage where, with rare exception, seas and lakes are designated via an appositive or an attributive adjective.<sup>15</sup> Instead, this genitive construction corresponds exactly to familiar Hebrew and Aramaic grammatical conventions. Theissen concludes from this that *the Sea of Galilee* can be traced back to a Semitic name, or, alternatively, was formed by analogy with such Semitic names. Does *the Sea of Galilee*, therefore, derive from local usage (so Theissen), or does it originate with one of the evangelists or their tradents?

---

<sup>13</sup> Matt 4:18; 15:29; Mark 1:16; 7:31; John 6:1.

<sup>14</sup> Theissen, “Meer’ und ,See’,” 13–15.

<sup>15</sup> Theissen, “Meer’ und ,See’,” 21.

To begin, we must be clear as to the number of independent witnesses to this designation. All attestations to *the Sea of Galilee* outside the NT are excluded as their usage ultimately derives from the canonical gospels. Mark is an independent witness on the basis of Markan priority, and Matthew is excluded on the same basis, its two occurrences having Markan parallels. This leaves John as the only other potential independent witness. Appealing to its presence in John 6:1, Theissen asserts that the Markan evangelist did not create the designation himself. Of course, such an appeal assumes John's independence from Mark. If it could be demonstrated that the Johannine evangelist knew Mark's gospel, or was at least familiar with Markan (not simply pre-Markan) traditions, which is the view adopted for this study,<sup>16</sup> then Theissen's appeal would have no grounds.

Theissen's other arguments likewise falter. Not only does Theissen offer no positive evidence that *the Sea of Galilee* was ever employed by local residents or that Mark inherited this designation from his sources, he fails to make a distinction between the two parts of the designation. That is, Theissen's arguments may explain the origin of Mark's topographical designation, θάλασσα, which can be attributed to local usage, but they do not actually explain the origin of Mark's geopolitical designation, τῆς Γαλιλαίας. Theissen's arguments would be no different had Mark used something besides τῆς Γαλιλαίας to identify this body of water, and so they offer no support for his claim that Mark is not responsible for τῆς Γαλιλαίας.

What, then, is the evidence that the *Sea of Galilee* originates with Mark and is not derived from local usage or pre-Markan sources? First, given Markan priority and Johannine familiarity with Mark, Mark provides the only independent witness to *the Sea of Galilee*; John 6:1 cannot be used as evidence against Markan innovation. Second, given that the designations, *Gennesaret*, *Tarichea*, and *Tiberias*, for this body of water all show signs of local usage, the absence of any independent attestation to *the Sea of Galilee* in Christian literature and its complete absence from ancient literature in general, and Jewish literature in particular, strongly suggests not only that *the*

---

<sup>16</sup> C. K. Barrett notes that in the early period of critical NT scholarship, John's familiarity with Mark was a common position (*The Gospel according to St. John* (2d. ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), (42). Currently, this remains a minority view, albeit one that has recently gone through a resurgence. See, e.g., Paul H. Anderson, *The Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus: Modern Foundations Reconsidered* (LBS; London: T&T Clark, 2006); Barrett, *John*, 42–66; Richard Bauckham, "John for Readers of Mark," in *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (ed. Richard Bauckham; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 147–71. Martin Hengel, *The Johannine Question* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM Press, 1989), 75.



*Sea of Galilee* is of Christian origin, but that it is a Markan creation. Had it been present within Christian tradition prior to and independent of Mark, we might expect at least one example of independent attestation.

These, of course, are negative arguments. More positive is the presence of a Galilee motif in Mark. While scholars may debate its meaning and significance, a consensus remains, nonetheless, regarding its existence.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the designation, τῆς Γαλιλαίας, accords well with and contributes to this Markan motif, increasing the probability that the evangelist did not appropriate this geopolitical designation from prior usage, be it Christian or local, but in fact created it as part of a larger rhetorical strategy,<sup>18</sup> perhaps fashioning its syntax in accordance with Semitic conventions for identifying bodies of water.

By being introduced as *of Galilee*, the sea is drawn into a network of narrative associations created through the recurrence of *Galilee* and so acquires part of its narrative identity via these associations. For example, Jesus is not simply *from Nazareth* but *from Nazareth of Galilee* (1:9), which is not of little consequence given that Peter is later linked to the criminal Jesus on account of his being recognized as a Galilean (14:70). Moreover, Galilee (and not Judea) is the place where Jesus proclaims the kingdom of God in word and deed (1:14, 39), where news about Jesus first spreads (1:28), from where crowds stream to Jesus (3:7), and, most significantly, where the disciples will encounter Jesus after his resurrection (14:28; 16:7). In being designated *of Galilee*, the sea participates in this narrative-wide network of associations involving key aspects of Jesus' ministry and identity. To the extent that τῆς Γαλιλαίας draws θάλασσα into the Galilee motif, it contributes to the latter's avoidability.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Theissen never discusses Mark's Galilee motif in his attempt to determine the origins of *the Sea of Galilee* in Mark, which is unfortunate because it might have opened up other avenues of exploration. To be fair, at the end of his study Theissen does acknowledge that only a little light has been shed on the questions he attempts to answer and that a more comprehensive analysis of the gospel's individuality is required ("Meer' und 'See'," 25).

<sup>18</sup> "This 'sea' . . . is not known by this name outside of the New Testament. . . . Mark's usage of the full phrase [i.e., ἡ θάλασσα τῆς Γαλιλαίας] probably reflects his interest in the Galilee theme" (Marcus, *Mark*, 179).

<sup>19</sup> For real readers of Mark familiar with the normal geopolitical designations for this body of water, identifying the sea as *of Galilee* would have made these narrative associations more prominent, increasing the potential for their rhetorical impact.

### The Sea of Galilee

Commentators often draw attention to the fact that Mark identifies this body of water as a *sea* (θάλασσα) when it is really a fresh-water *lake* (λίμνη) and are tempted to see significance in Mark's choosing θάλασσα over the more "precise," "correct," or "common" λίμνη. In fact, one might be tempted to argue for θάλασσα's avoidability solely on these grounds. One could appeal to Josephus who identifies it as a λίμνη or, even better, Luke who retains none of Mark's uses of θάλασσα for this body of water,<sup>20</sup> either replacing them with λίμνη<sup>21</sup> or ὕδωρ<sup>22</sup> or removing them altogether.<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, the evidence does not allow for such a simplistic argument.

We cannot assume that the author consciously chose θάλασσα over λίμνη nor that the authorial audience is expected to recognize the rhetorical significance in the author's employment of θάλασσα vis-à-vis λίμνη. First, in biblical literature, "linguistic usage does not differentiate between the open sea and inland lakes."<sup>24</sup> In the LXX, θάλασσα is ambiguous and designates both seas and large lakes.<sup>25</sup> It is used not only for the Mediterranean Sea (Num 34:6) and the Red Sea (Exod 10:19), which are seas, but also for the Dead Sea (Gen 14:3) and the Sea of Kinnereth (Josh 12:3), which are actually lakes. The use of "θάλασσα in the sense of λίμνη is thoroughly Semitic;"<sup>26</sup> its ambiguity in the LXX reflects that of the underlying Hebrew יָם, which also designates both seas and lakes.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the LXX always uses θάλασσα to refer to this particular body of water (Num 34:11; Josh 12:3; 13:27). Thus, Mark's employment of θάλασσα might simply stem from biblical usage. Second, Mark's use of θάλασσα could reflect local usage. In his *Meteorology*, Aristotle makes reference to "the *lake* (λίμνη) at the foot of the Caucasus, which the inhabitants of these parts call a *sea* (θάλαπταν)" (1:13). Theissen thinks that such local practices stand behind

---

<sup>20</sup> Luke retains Mark's metaphorical uses of θάλασσα (Mark 9:42; 11:23 // Luke 17:2, 6) and adds one of his own (21:25).

<sup>21</sup> Mark 4:1a; 5:13a // Luke 5:2a; 8:33a

<sup>22</sup> Mark 4:39, 41 // Luke 8:24, 25

<sup>23</sup> Mark 4:1b, 1c; 5:1, 13b // Luke 5:2b, 2c; 8:26, 33b

<sup>24</sup> O. Böcher, "θάλασσα," *NIDNTT*, 983–85. The one exception is the author of Luke-Acts who distinguishes seas (θάλασσα) from lakes (λίμνη).

<sup>25</sup> Clark, "Sea of Galilee," 2:348.

<sup>26</sup> Matthew Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (2d. ed.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), 96.

<sup>27</sup> HALOT "יָם," 1:413–14; Clark, "Sea of Galilee," 2:348.

the use of θάλασσα in the gospels<sup>28</sup> and that its use represents a provincial or restricted worldview whereby the great Mediterranean Sea is unknown, or at least plays no central role in the worldview of the authors and/or the traditions they appropriate.<sup>29</sup> This data offers other potential explanations for Mark's use of θάλασσα and so precludes any arguments that attempt to see significance solely in the fact that θάλασσα is used, and not λίμνη. This is not to suggest that Mark's use of θάλασσα lacks any of the significance that commentators attribute to it, only that such claims require better foundations.

“Whatever the motivation for the choice of *thalassa*, the term serves in Mark with richer scriptural connotations and as a more significant contrast to ‘land’ or ‘earth’ than would ‘lake.’”<sup>30</sup> On two occasions θάλασσα and γῆ are explicitly juxtaposed, which serves to set Jesus apart. In 4:1, Jesus teaches from a boat *on the sea* (ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ) to a crowd gathered at the sea *on the land* (ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς). This contrast is emphasized through parallel clause structures wherein each begins with the subject followed by a two-step progression that concludes with the two contrasting spaces (Figure 5–2). Moreover, “the Greek text juxtaposes ‘sitting’ with ‘on the sea’ rather than with ‘in the boat,’ thus accenting the more fundamental sea/land distinction.”<sup>31</sup> In 6:47, a similar contrast is established between the disciples who are in a boat in the middle of the Sea (ἐν μέσῳ τῆς θαλάσσης) and Jesus who is alone on the land (ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς). Again, the contrast is underscored through parallel grammatical structures (Figure 5–2).

	Subject	Spatial Location 1	Spatial Location 2
<b>4:1</b>	αὐτὸν πᾶς ὁ ὄχλος	εἰς πλοῖον ἐμβάντα πρὸς τὴν θάλασσαν	καθῆσθαι ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἦσαν
<b>6:47</b>	τὸ πλοῖον αὐτὸς μόνος		ἐν μέσῳ τῆς θαλάσσης ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς

**Figure 5–2: Parallel Clause Structures in Mark 4:1 and 6:47**

<sup>28</sup> Cf. France, *Mark*, 364: “Mark, Matthew and John refer to this relatively small inland stretch of fresh water as θάλασσα, reflecting local usage based on the OT: *yam-kinneret*, . . . for which the LXX uses θάλασσα.”

<sup>29</sup> Theissen, “‘Meer’ und ‘See,’” 7–9.

<sup>30</sup> Malbon, “Jesus,” 364.

<sup>31</sup> Malbon, “Jesus,” 374.

Another set of arguments that highlights the author's conscious choice of *θάλασσα* relates to the number of episodes that are located beside the sea or whose connection to the sea only comes about by special effort on the part of the author.

### Beside the Sea

In Mark, four episodes are explicitly situated *beside the sea* (παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν). In 1:16–20, Jesus is *passing along beside the Sea of Galilee* (παράγων παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν τῆς Γαλιλαίας, 1:16) when he calls his first disciples. In this episode, four of the five main characters are fishers, and so the seaside setting is quite appropriate; yet, as we shall see, παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν also serves to link non-contiguous episodes in Mark.

In 2:13–17, Jesus goes out *again beside the sea* (πάλιν παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν, 2:13) and teaches a crowd. Then, *passing along [beside the sea]* (παράγων [παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν],<sup>32</sup> 2:14), Jesus calls Levi, who is a tax-collector, not a fisher. Levi's calling echoes that of Simon, Andrew, James, and John, not least in its being situated παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν, especially since the episode does not require a seaside setting. Its absence from Mark would not affect the story as its absence from the Matthean and Lukan parallels demonstrates. Instead, παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν serves primarily as a link to the callings of the first disciples.<sup>33</sup>

Παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν next appears in the parables discourse where once *again* (πάλιν) Jesus is teaching a large crowd *beside the sea* (4:1). Here, the seaside setting fits since Jesus teaches the crowd from a boat on the sea, yet παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν also serves to recall two earlier episodes; namely, 2:13–17, in which Jesus teaches a crowd παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν, and 3:7–12, in which Jesus withdraws *to the sea* (πρὸς τὴν θάλασσαν, 3:7) where large crowds gather and a boat is introduced into the narrative.

---

<sup>32</sup> In 2:14, παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν does not occur in the text but is supplied from 2:13 as a DNC instantiating the required Path complement of παράγω.

<sup>33</sup> Levi is a τελώνης, or tax-farmer, which “denotes a person who purchases from the state the rights to official taxes and dues . . . and who collects these from the people who owe them” (Michel, “τελώνης,” *TDNT* 8:89). Given that the tax office is located beside the sea, it is possible that Levi belongs to the tax-fishing system where fishing rights were leased from the government and then sold to local fishers (Wilhelm H. Wuellner, *The Meaning of “Fishers of Men”* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 23–24, 43). If so, then the parallels between the calling of Levi and that of the first four disciples includes an occupation associated with fishing, in which case the seaside setting would be quite appropriate. Even so, the seaside setting's primary function is to provide a rhetorical link to 1:16–20.

Finally, in 5:21, when Jesus returns from the other side of the sea and a large crowd gathers about him, the narrator notes, *and he was beside the sea* (καὶ ἦν παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν). This addition, appearing almost as an afterthought, is curious since the seaside setting is clearly implied by Jesus' having just arrived by boat. Moreover, the remainder of the episode, taken up with the healings of the hemorrhaging woman and Jairus' daughter, does not even take place beside the sea. So, what is its purpose? Given the three prior occasions in which crowds gather about Jesus beside the sea (2:13–17; 3:7–12; 4:1–34), the conjunction of *Jesus, the crowd, and beside the sea* is intended to evoke these earlier episodes.

Thus, in two episodes, παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν contributes significantly to the narrative's *story* (1:16; 4:1), and in two episodes it contributes little or nothing (2:13, 5:21). At the same time, it contributes to the narrative's *discourse* on all four occasions. By explicitly situating these episodes *beside the sea*, the narrator creates narrative links between these episodes that do not occur in narrative sequence. Now why the author has chosen to associate these episodes in this way will be taken up later. Whatever the reason, παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν serves primarily in a rhetorical capacity, which points to the avoidability of θάλασσα.

### Special Effort

In 7:31–37, Jesus' healing of the deaf-mute begins with the notoriously-difficult itinerary: καὶ πάλιν ἐξελθὼν ἐκ τῶν ὁρίων Τύρου ἦλθεν διὰ Σιδῶνος εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν τῆς Γαλιλαίας ἀνὰ μέσον τῶν ὁρίων Δεκαπόλεως (7:31). The questions occasioned by this itinerary are well-known and need not be discussed here other than to note that any of its purported awkwardness could be used as evidence for θάλασσα's avoidability. However one interprets διὰ Σιδῶνος and ἀνὰ μέσον τῶν ὁρίων Δεκαπόλεως, the syntax clearly presents the Sea of Galilee as Jesus' ultimate destination. Thus, the narrator has, by means of a rather convoluted itinerary, established a seaside setting for 7:31–38 as well as 8:1–9,<sup>34</sup> neither of which requires a setting beside the sea.

In 5:1–20, upon completion of their first sea crossing, Jesus and his disciples arrive εἰς τὴν χώραν τῶν Γερασηνῶν (5:1), a designation that has occasioned much debate. First, Γερασηνῶν is problematic given the number and diversity of variant

---

<sup>34</sup> The seaside location of 8:1–9 is confirmed by the fact that Jesus and his disciples embark in a boat immediately following the feeding (8:10).

readings for both Mark and its synoptic parallels. Commentators are now generally agreed that an original Γερασηνῶν in Mark and Luke and an original Γαδαρηνῶν in Matthew best account for the various readings within the manuscript traditions. These variants are best explained as attempts to address the geographical problem Γερασηνῶν poses for an episode that requires proximity to the sea. Gerasa is some thirty miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee, “an extraordinary run even for demon-possessed swine.”<sup>35</sup>

Second, questions have been raised regarding whether the references to the pigs, or at least their demise, is a secondary addition. John P. Meier believes this story to have originated in Palestine or an adjoining territory. Given the originality of Γερασηνῶν in Mark and assuming its presence in the original form of the story, Meier concludes that the incident of the pigs rushing into the Sea of Galilee is a secondary addition since “the native storyteller would have known that Gerasa was nowhere near the Sea of Galilee.”<sup>36</sup>

Yet, if the fate of the pigs is secondary, when was it introduced? Did the account Mark inherited include it, or is it a Markan creation? This is a difficult, if not impossible, question to resolve definitively, but a case can be made that the swine’s watery demise owes its existence to Markan redaction. First, the references to coming to the other side of the sea (5:1a) and disembarking from and embarking into the boat (5:2a, 18a) are consonant with distinctly Markan motifs and the ways in which the author has linked episodes, and thus are more likely to be redactional. This means that, as Guelich observes, “only the drowning in 5:13 connects the sea with the exorcism *per se*.”<sup>37</sup> Moreover, Guelich thinks it more likely that 5:13 was introduced along with 5:1a, 2a, and 18a and is not what gave rise to these redactions. If he is correct, then Mark retained the original setting of Gerasa even while shifting the focus of the story to the sea. As the story now stands in Mark, a seaside setting is required in order to accommodate the climactic downfall of the swine in the sea. But the above arguments suggest that the seaside setting is a requirement precisely as a result of Markan redaction, in which case this episode provides another illustration of a concerted effort on the part of the author to link an activity of Jesus with the sea.

---

<sup>35</sup> John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark* (SP 2; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2002), 163.

<sup>36</sup> John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (3 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1991–2001), 2:651–52. Guelich, Grundmann, Pesch, and Ernst also take this view (Guelich, *Mark*, 276–77).

<sup>37</sup> Guelich, *Mark*, 276.

In these episodes, the presence of a seaside setting is primarily or solely a feature of the narrative's discourse and so points to its rhetorical function and thus its avoidability.

## THE FREQUENCY AND AVOIDABILITY OF ΠΛΟΙΟΝ

### THE FREQUENCY OF ΠΛΟΙΟΝ

Mark employs two different words for boat, πλοῖον and πλοῦριον,<sup>38</sup> which combine for a total of 18 occurrences within 11 different episodes. Since πλοῦριον occurs only once, the following discussions center upon πλοῖον. In terms of frequency within Mark, πλοῖον ranks 93rd out of 1,319 lemmas (the 93rd percentile), and as a common noun ranks 19th out of 437 (the 95th percentile). Additionally, 15 of its 17 occurrences appear in Mark 4:1–8:30, making it the 5th most frequently occurring common noun in the Sea Crossing movement (the 98th percentile).<sup>39</sup>

The only other biblical writing in which πλοῖον occurs more times than in Mark is Acts with 19 occurrences. Of the gospels, John and Matthew come the closest with 12<sup>40</sup> and 13 occurrences respectively, although Matthew's 7 episodes come closer to Mark's 11 episodes than do John's 3. Once again, Luke comes in last with 8 occurrences in just 2 episodes. In terms of the frequency of recurrence πλοῖον, Mark ranks second among biblical books, with only the very short book of Jonah ranking higher (Figure 5–3).

	Occurrences of πλοῖον*	Total Number of Words in Book	Frequency of Recurrence
<b>Jonah</b>	4	1,090	3.67
<b>Mark</b>	18	11,133	1.62
<b>Acts</b>	19	18,450	1.03
<b>John</b>	12	15,635	.77
<b>Matthew</b>	13	18,634	.71
<b>James</b>	1	1,742	.57
<b>Luke</b>	8	19,482	.15

\*Figures for Mark and John combine occurrences of πλοῖον and πλοῦριον.

**Figure 5–3: Frequency of Recurrence of πλοῖον in Biblical Literature**

<sup>38</sup> Πλοῦριον occurs just five times in biblical literature, once in Mark (3:9) and four times in John (6:22, 23, 24; 21:8).

<sup>39</sup> Only ἄρτος, ὄχλος, ἄνθρωπος, and μαθητής occur more frequently.

<sup>40</sup> John = πλοῖον (8×); πλοῦριον (4×).

In Mark as a whole and in the Sea Crossing movement in particular, πλοῖον is comparable to θάλασσα in terms of number of occurrences, number of episodes, and frequency of recurrence, making it (and by association πλοῦριον) a candidate for the foundation of a literary motif.

#### THE AVOIDABILITY OF ΠΛΟΙΟΝ

In Mark, there are occurrences of πλοῖον (and πλοῦριον) that contribute little or nothing to the story but instead operate primarily at the level of the narrative's discourse, which points to their avoidability on these occasions.

For example, in Mark 3:7–12, the rhetorical function of πλοῦριον is demonstrable, ironically, through its not functioning within the story. Concerned that the huge crowds might crush him, Jesus tells the disciples to have a boat ready for him (3:9), yet the episode lacks any indication, even implicit, that the boat is put to its intended use. That the boat plays no role within the story itself probably explains its absence from the Matthean and Lukan parallels.<sup>41</sup> Instead, the boat serves to highlight the magnitude of Jesus' magnetism on account of his ability to heal, "for he had healed so many that whosoever had diseases fell upon him in order to touch him" (3:10).

The introduction of a boat into the story also foreshadows the next time Jesus is situated beside the sea, namely, at the beginning of the parables discourse where a boat is introduced because of a large crowd (4:1).<sup>42</sup> The fact that 2:13 and 3:7–12 are the only scenes prior to 4:1 in which Jesus ministers to large crowds beside the sea supports this assertion. Why the author has intentionally recalled both of these episodes at this point in the narrative is less obvious, especially in the case of 3:7–12 which concerns healings and exorcisms, not teaching. Perhaps the answer lies in the Markan tendency to treat Jesus' teaching and exorcising as being cut from the same cloth. This is seen in the programmatic scene in the Capernaum synagogue where Jesus' exorcism is met with astonishment over his authoritative teaching (1:27) and in the use of the title, Teacher, in contexts where Jesus' exorcising and healing authority is highlighted (4:38; 5:35; 9:17; 10:51).

---

<sup>41</sup> Matt 4:24–25 // Luke 6:17–19. Also absent from these synoptic parallels is the seaside setting.

<sup>42</sup> Contra Gundry, *Mark*, 160.



Another example appears in ESC<sup>1</sup> where *other boats* (ἄλλα πλοῖα) are said to accompany Jesus (4:36), a curious detail given that they play no role in the story, which again helps explain their absence from the synoptic parallels.<sup>43</sup> Various reasons have been offered to explain their presence in the narrative,<sup>44</sup> but whatever the reason, they clearly play a rhetorical role. As van Iersel notes, when these other boats are initially introduced, they pose no problem for the reader, “for by now he or she knows that Jesus is constantly being followed by all sorts of people.”<sup>45</sup> It is only at the end of the episode, when these other boats receive no further mention, that their presence in the narrative provokes questions. At a minimum, then, these ἄλλα πλοῖα serve to highlight Jesus’ popularity, much as the boats in 3:9 and 4:1 do.

### The Boat

Another argument for the avoidability of πλοῖον concerns its articulation in the Sea Crossing movement. Basing an argument on the presence or absence of the article must be done with care. First, there is the ever-present danger of understanding the Greek article from the perspective of English usage. As A. T. Robertson writes, “The article is never meaningless in Greek, though it often fails to correspond with the English idiom.”<sup>46</sup> Second, the use of the article may vary from time period to time period, genre to genre, and author to author. Any conclusions offered here are, therefore, provisional, absent a study that considers all 1,493 occurrences of the article in Mark. Finally, the diversity within the manuscript tradition complicates matters exponentially. Major variants involving the presence or absence of the article with πλοῖον occur in at least four places in Mark,<sup>47</sup> not to mention variants in the synoptic parallels, yet there is not adequate space to engage in a text-critical argument for each of these readings. Consequently, the following arguments are based upon the text as presented in the critical editions of the NA<sup>27</sup> and USB<sup>4</sup>.

---

<sup>43</sup> Matt 8:18, 23–27 // Luke 8:22–25

<sup>44</sup> For a survey see Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium* (2 vols.; HTKNT 2; Freiburg: Herder, 1976–1977), 1:270n7; Marcus, *Mark*, 332–33.

<sup>45</sup> van Iersel, *Mark*, 194.

<sup>46</sup> A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934), 756.

<sup>47</sup> Mark 4:1; 6:32; 6:45; and 8:10. Minor variants occur in 4:36a and 5:21. Information on variants has been collated from the NA<sup>27</sup> and Reuben J. Swanson, ed., *New Testament Greek Manuscripts: Mark* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).

In Koine, the primary function of the article is “to point out an object or to draw attention to it,” which is in keeping with its “demonstrative origin.”<sup>48</sup> Yet, pointing to, identifying, or drawing attention to something is not the same as making something definite that would otherwise be indefinite; the “presence or absence of an article does not make a substantive definite or indefinite.”<sup>49</sup> This is not to deny the Greek article’s definitizing function, it is only to stress that this is not its sole, or even primary, function. This leads to an important distinction: when the article is present, the governed noun is always definite though *why* the noun is definite may be due to factors other than the presence of the article. In such cases, the use of the article is not to definitize but to point to, identify, and/or draw attention to the governed substantive. These distinctions will be important when evaluating the significance of Mark’s use of the article with πλοῖον.

Finally, one of the most common uses of the Greek article is its anaphoric function, its referring “back to something stated or implied in the previous context.”<sup>50</sup> Here, “The first mention of a substantive is usually anarthrous because it is merely being introduced. But subsequent mentions of it use the article, for the article is now pointing back to *the* substantive previously mentioned.”<sup>51</sup> This pattern is observable with πλοῖον (and πλοῖάριον) in all of the gospels. For example, in John 6:17–21, the disciples embark εἰς πλοῖον (6:17), but afterwards Jesus approaches τοῦ πλοίου (6:19), the disciples take him εἰς τὸ πλοῖον (6:21a), and immediately τὸ πλοῖον arrives at their destination (6:21b).

Turning now to the Sea Crossing movement, the pervasive use of πλοῖον with the article creates the impression that only one boat is used for all six sea crossings. In 4:1–8:30, πλοῖον occurs 14 times in the singular; the first occurrence is anarthrous while the remaining 13 are articular. *In each case, the semantic force of the article is anaphoric,*<sup>52</sup> *which corresponds to expected Greek usage in most, but not all, cases.*

---

<sup>48</sup> H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1957), 137–38.

<sup>49</sup> Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament* (BLG 2; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 103.

<sup>50</sup> Matthew S. DeMoss, *Pocket Dictionary for the Study of New Testament Greek* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2001), 18.

<sup>51</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 217–18.

<sup>52</sup> In fact, there is no other semantic category that these articles fit into. Consequently, whenever *article* is used in the following argument, its anaphoric function is assumed. Cf. Gundry, *Mark*, 160.

First, the article with *πλοῖον* in 4:36b, 37a, 37b; 5:18; 6:47, 51; and 8:14<sup>53</sup> are all expected because they refer back to a previous occurrence of *πλοῖον* within the same episode. Second, the anaphoric article with *πλοῖον* occurs at the beginning of some episodes but in ways that are expected. The initial reference to *the boat* at the outset of ESC<sup>1</sup> is expected because this episode opens with Jesus already in the boat (4:36a), his having embarked in it prior to the parables discourse (4:1). Also, though references to *the boat* in 5:2, 5:21, and 6:54 introduce new episodes, they occur in disembarking and/or arrival statements at the conclusion of a sea crossing, and so the anaphoric article is not surprising.

The expectability of the anaphoric article with *πλοῖον* at the outset of ESC<sup>2</sup> is more difficult to assess (6:45). The reader might expect it on the grounds that it occurs in relative proximity to the previous occurrence of *πλοῖον* (6:32). Support for its expectability might also be made on the grounds that an anaphoric article occurs in the Matthean parallel (14:22);<sup>54</sup> yet, this is problematic because it is impossible to determine whether it occurs here because it corresponds to expected Koine usage or because Matthew has mechanically reproduced Mark 6:45. On the other hand, the absence of the article in variant readings of Mark 6:45<sup>55</sup> and Matt 14:22<sup>56</sup> give evidence that an anarthrous construction would have been expected, especially given that these manuscripts retain all subsequent articles with *πλοῖον* in the remainder of the episode in both Matthew and Mark. In the end, the evidence for the expectability of the article in 6:45 is ambiguous.

There are, however, two unambiguous examples of an anaphoric article with *πλοῖον* contrary to expected Koine usage. In 6:32 and 8:10, an articular *πλοῖον* occurs at the beginning of an episode even though a number of scenes have transpired since the last reference to *πλοῖον* (5:21; 6:54). Even if the same boat is being used, the article is unnecessary; instead an anarthrous construction is called for. Again, the textual evidence supports such an expectation, with manuscripts presenting anarthrous

---

<sup>53</sup> Although *πλοῖον* does not occur in this episode prior to its use in 8:14, the occurrence in 8:14 still fits here because in 8:13 *πλοῖον* instantiates the required Goal complement of *ἐμβαίνειν* as a DNC (8:13). In fact, this is the only occurrence of *ἐμβαίνειν* wherein *πλοῖον* does not lexically realize its Goal complement (cf. 4:1; 5:18; 6:45; 8:10).

<sup>54</sup> Luke does not have a parallel to ESC<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>55</sup>  $\Sigma \Theta f^1$  565 33 700 1424

<sup>56</sup> B  $\Sigma f^1$  33 565 700 892 l 844 l 2211 pc bo<sup>ms</sup> mae Eus

readings for both 6:32<sup>57</sup> and 8:10.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, the absence of the article in Matthew 14:13, which represents a modification of Mark 6:32, also supports the expectation for an anarthrous construction here. A second issue has to do with whether the boats in 6:32 and 8:10 could really be the same as those most recently employed as the anaphoric articles would suggest. In 5:21, Jesus and his disciples disembark somewhere on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. In 6:32, following a trip to Nazareth and the disciples' itinerant mission in Galilee, they embark in a boat from the western shore. Though the exact locations of the disembarking in 5:21 and the embarking in 6:32 are unknown, both are on the western shore. It is therefore possible, even if we do not know how probable, that the boat in 6:32 is the same as boat as in 5:21. This, however, cannot be said of the boat in 8:10. In 6:53–54, Jesus and the disciples disembark on the western shore, having moored the boat at Gennesaret. Yet, when they embark in 8:10, they do so on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, having just completed a circuitous sojourn through Gentile territory and arriving in the Decapolis (7:24, 31). Thus, the anaphoric article in 8:10 is not merely unnecessary and unexpected, as it is in 6:32, but entirely inexplicable since it is impossible, or at least exceedingly improbable,<sup>59</sup> that the boat in 8:10 is the same boat as in 6:54.

Thus, the recurrent use of *πλοῖον* with the anaphoric article gives the impression that only one boat was employed for all six sea crossings in Mark, which is highly improbable given Jesus' itinerary. Yet, even if the itinerary were such that the use of a single boat were possible, the employment of the anaphoric article in all of these instances is unnecessary and unexpected. Thus, for whatever reason, the author is intentionally drawing the reader's attention to *the boat*, which points to its avoidability within the Sea Crossing movement.

---

<sup>57</sup> Ⲙ 565 700 1424

<sup>58</sup> L W *f*<sup>1</sup> *f*<sup>13</sup> 28 33 124 579 700

<sup>59</sup> One would have to assume that they carried the boat with them as they made their way through Gentile territory or that someone brought the boat across the sea in anticipation of their embarking from the eastern shore.

## I. INNER CORE

First, by virtue of their having satisfied the criteria of frequency and avoidability, θάλασσα and πλοῖον/πλοιάριον together constitute the inner core of the Sea Crossing motif associational cluster. All occurrences of πλοῖον and πλοιάριον and all but two occurrences of θάλασσα participate in the Sea Crossing motif and so are included in the associational cluster. The final two occurrences of θάλασσα are metaphorical (9:42; 11:23), perform a different rhetorical function than the other seventeen occurrences, and so have been excluded from the associational cluster.

## II. SEMANTIC FRAMES

Second, the remaining occurrences of θάλασσα and πλοῖον evoke at least two general semantic frames in Mark: FISHING and SEA TRANSIT. Substantives that have the potential of evoking these same semantic frames in the narrative are ἄλας, ἄλιεύς, δίκτυον, ἰχθύδιον, ἰχθύς, μισθωτός, ἄνεμος, γαλήνη, κύμα, λαῖλαψ, ποταμός, προσκεφάλαιον, and πρύμνα.

FISHING. In the ancient Mediterranean world, fishing was a significant economic activity, both a subsistence occupation and a commercial enterprise. Fish was an important component, if not a staple, of the ancient diet. “If fish never ranked among the ‘big three’ [i.e., wine, oil, and grain], it must have been a strong candidate for fourth place.”<sup>61</sup> As for northern Palestine, the literary and material remains indicate that the Sea of Galilee supported a significant fishing industry in the Roman pe-

<sup>60</sup> The data that is collected and filtered for inclusion in the Sea Crossing motif associational cluster is presented in Tables 1a and 1b of Appendix B.

<sup>61</sup> Tønnes Bekker-Nielsen, “Fish in the Ancient Economy,” in *Ancient History Matters: Studies Presented to Jens Erik Skydsgaard on His Seventieth Birthday* (ed. Karen Ascani and et al.; AnRomSup 30; Rome: L’Erma di Bretschneider, 2002), 35. Until fairly recently the orthodox view had been that fishing and fish played only a marginal role in the economy of the ancient world; see, e.g., Thomas W. Gallant, *A Fisherman’s Tale: An Analysis of the Potential Productivity of Fishing in the Ancient World* (Ghent: Belgian Archaeological Mission, 1985). For a critique of Gallant, see Nicholas Purcell, “Eating Fish: The Paradoxes of Seafood,” in *Food in Antiquity* (ed. John Wilkins, David Harvey and Mike Dobson; Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995), 132–49. Scholars, however, are increasingly arguing that there is evidence for ancient fish processing on a commercial scale in the Mediterranean as well as in other inland regions. For these newer views see Tønnes Bekker-Nielsen, ed., *Ancient Fishing and Fish Processing in the Black Sea Region* (BSeaS 2; Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2005) and especially “Fish as a Source of Food in Antiquity,” by John Wilkins in that same volume (21–30). For more general discussions of food in antiquity see Peter Garnsey, ed., *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); John M. Wilkins and Shaun Hill, *Food in the Ancient World* (Malden, Md.: Blackwell, 2006), especially 140–63.

riod,<sup>62</sup> including the export of salted fish.<sup>63</sup> Thus, the FISHING frame represents a well-known, important aspect of ancient Mediterranean life and encompasses a number of activities and features, ranging from the catching of fish to its preparation and consumption. In Mark, substantives that have the potential of evoking FISHING include fish (ἰχθύδιον, ἰχθύς), those engaged in fishing (ἀλιεύς, μισθωτός), places of fishing (θάλασσα, ποταμός), equipment used in fishing (δίκτυον, πλοῖον, πλοιάριον), including particular features of that equipment (προσκεφάλαιον,<sup>64</sup> πρύμνα), and salt (ἅλας), which was used in the preservation of fish.

*SEA TRAVEL.* In the ancient world, the sea was viewed as a place of chaos and mystery, and travel on the sea connoted difficulty and hardship. The dangers of sea travel are reflected in popular stories in ancient literature that tell of shipwrecks and storms at sea as in Homer's *Odyssey* and the Old Testament's Jonah.<sup>65</sup> Thus, the SEA TRAVEL frame comprises not only the place (θάλασσα) and the manner of sea travel (πλοῖον, πλοιάριον) but also the elements and forces that inhibit the progress and threaten the safety of voyages on the sea (ἄνεμος, γαλήνη, κύμα, λαῖλαψ).

*Exclusive Associations.* Of the substantives identified, eight occur exclusively in narrative contexts in which FISHING or SEA TRAVEL are evoked, and thus all instances of these words are included in the associational cluster: ἀλιεύς (1:16; 17), δίκτυον (1:18, 19), μισθωτός (1:20), γαλήνη (4:39), κύμα (4:37), λαῖλαψ (4:37), προσκεφάλαιον (4:38), and πρύμνα (4:38). All except the one idiomatic occurrence of ἄνεμος (13:27) are included in the cluster since they evoke SEA TRAVEL (4:37, 39ab, 41; 6:48, 51).

*Excluded.* Two words occur only in narrative contexts in which neither FISHING or SEA TRAVEL is evoked and so all occurrences are excluded from the cluster: ποταμός and ἅλας. The same could be argued for ἰχθύδιον and ἰχθύς as both occur only within the feeding narratives. Yet, all instances of ἰχθύδιον (8:7) and ἰχθύς

<sup>62</sup> John J. Rousseau and Rami Arav, *Jesus and His World: An Archaeological and Cultural Dictionary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 94. Seán Freyne, *Jesus: A Jewish Galilean* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 50–53.

<sup>63</sup> “Tarichaeae, the Greek name for Magdala, refers to the industry of salting fish” (Freyne, *Jesus*, 50).

<sup>64</sup> Here, προσκεφάλαιον is taken to refer to a sandbag ordinarily used as a ballast and stored beneath the elevated deck of the stern when not in use, which sailors may have employed as a cushion. Shelley Wachsmann, *The Sea of Galilee Boat: A 2000-Year-Old Discovery from the Sea of Legends* (Cambridge, Mass.: Perseus, 2000), 326–28.

<sup>65</sup> Virginia H. Knight, *The Renewal of Epic: Responses to Homer in the Argonautica of Apollonius* (MBCBSup 152; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 73.

(6:38, 41ab, 43) are included in the associational cluster since *fish* is so central to FISHING so as to be able to evoke that frame on its own. Moreover, both feeding narratives occur within the Sea Crossing movement, are immediately followed by a sea crossing, and are alluded to in one or both of the final two ESCs. These narrative associations suggest that the inclusion of ἰχθύδιον and ἰχθύς within the feeding narratives serves to evoke the FISHING semantic frame and so draw the feeding narratives into the Sea Crossing motif.

### III. NARRATIVE ASSOCIATIONS

Third, a substantive that is closely associated with θάλασσα and πλοῖον in the narrative is ἄνεμος. In ESC<sup>1</sup>, Jesus *rebukes the wind and speaks to the sea* (ἐπετίμησεν τῷ ἀνέμῳ καὶ εἶπεν τῇ θαλάσσῃ, 4:39). Here ἄνεμος stands in syntactic and semantic parallel to θάλασσα, as both nouns instantiate the Experiencer argument predicated by the coordinated verbs, ἐπιτιμάω and λέγω, and as both are the recipients of Jesus' double command, σιώπα, πεφίμωσο (4:39). As previously noted, all but the idiomatic occurrence of ἄνεμος (13:27) are included in the associational cluster.

### IV. MODIFIERS

Fourth, words, phrases, and constructions are identified that grammatically modify any instances of the words included in the associational cluster after steps I–III: ἄνθρωπος, Γαλιλαία, δύο, ἐναντίος, μέγας, and ὀλίγος.<sup>66</sup>

*Included.* Γαλιλαία fails to satisfy the criterion of association, yet two of its occurrences warrant inclusion in the associational cluster. On two occasions, Mark explicitly identifies the sea as “the Sea of Galilee” (1:16; 7:31), a designation that likely originated with the author. Moreover, these two geopolitical designations frame all of the other occurrences of θάλασσα referring to this body of water. This appears intentional, which implies a rhetorical function in its connection with θάλασσα. Consequently, these two occurrences of Γαλιλαία are included in the associational cluster.

*Excluded.* None of the other words satisfy the criterion of association nor do they belong to any narrative grammars or microclusters, and so all occurrences are excluded from the associational cluster: ἄνθρωπος, δύο, ἐναντίος, μέγας, and ὀλίγος.

<sup>66</sup> Here, adjectives and genitive nouns.

## V. PREDICATORS

Finally, verbs and nouns are identified in which any instances of the words included in the associational cluster after steps I–III serve to instantiate a required argument:<sup>67</sup>

ἀμφιβάλλω, ἀναβαίνω, ἀναχωρέω, ἀπέρχομαι, ἀφίημι, γεμίζω, γίνομαι, διαπεράω, διέρχομαι, εἰμί, ἐλαύνω,<sup>68</sup> ἐμβαίνω, ἐπιβάλλω, ἐπιτιμάω, ἐξέρχομαι, ἔρχομαι, ἐσθίω, εὐλογέω, ἔχω, κάθημαι, καταρτίζω, κοπάζω, λαμβάνω, λέγω, μερίζω, μέσος, ὁρμάω, παράγω, παρατίθημι, πέραν, περιπατέω, προσκαρτερέω, προσορμίζομαι, σιωπάω, ὑπακούω, and φιμόω.

*Exclusive Associations.* Ten words are exclusively associated with words from steps I–III, and so all instances of these words are included in the associational cluster: ἀμφιβάλλω (1:16), ἀναχωρέω (3:7), διαπεράω (5:21; 6:53), ἐλαύνω (6:48), ἐμβαίνω (4:1; 5:18; 6:45; 8:10, 13), καταρτίζω (1:19), κοπάζω (4:39; 6:51), ὁρμάω (5:13), προσκαρτερέω (3:9), and προσορμίζομαι (6:53).

*Grammars.* Twelve words belong to at least one narrative grammar, and so only the particular instances of these words when they are functioning as a member of a narrative grammar are included in the associational cluster. Four words belong to the SEA SETTING grammar, which relates to movements toward the sea and settings beside the sea: ἀναχωρέω (3:7), ἐξέρχομαι (2:13), ἔρχομαι (7:31), and παράγω (1:16; 2:14). Seven words belong to the SEA CROSSING grammar, which relates to movements on and across the sea: ἀναβαίνω (6:51), ἀπέρχομαι (6:32; 8:13), διαπεράω (5:21; 6:53), διέρχομαι (4:35), ἐμβαίνω (4:1; 5:18; 6:45; 8:10, 13), ἐξέρχομαι (5:2; 6:34, 54), ἔρχομαι (5:1), and πέραν (4:35; 5:1, 21; 6:45; 8:13).<sup>69</sup> Two words belong to the SEA STORM grammar, which relates to the effects of adverse weather during the sea crossings: γεμίζω (4:37) and ἐπιβάλλω (4:37).

*Microclusters.* Four words belong to the narrative microcluster EXORCISM, and only the particular instances of these words when they are functioning as a member of EXORCISM are retained in the associational cluster: ἐπιτιμάω (1:25; 4:39), σιωπάω (4:39), ὑπακούω (1:27; 4:41), and φιμόω (1:25; 4:39). Positing an EXORCISM microcluster for the Sea Crossing motif is a tentative proposal and rests upon the unique, narrative connections between 1:21–28 and 4:35–41. While the initial plot sequence of each episode differs, the episodes synchronize midway through, exhibiting an im-

<sup>67</sup> Included are verbs whose arguments are lexically realized or permissibly absent.

<sup>68</sup> Here, πλοῖον instantiates the implied Pat argument of ἐλαύνω (6:48).

<sup>69</sup> The SEA CROSSING narrative grammar receives detailed treatment below.



pressive array of verbal and structural parallels (Figure 5–4). In each episode, Jesus *rebukes* (ἐπιτιμάω, 1:25; 4:39) a cosmic power by enjoining their *silence* (φιμόω, 1:25; 4:39). Their submission leads to the witnessing party expressing amazement and fear because these powers *obey* Jesus (ὑπακούω, 1:27; 4:41).

Mark 1:25–27 // Mark 4:39–41	
1:25a	καὶ ἐπετίμησεν αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγων·
4:39a	καὶ διεγερθεὶς ἐπετίμησεν τῷ ἀνέμῳ καὶ εἶπεν τῇ θαλάσῃ·
1:25b	φιμώθητι καὶ ἔξελθε ἐξ αὐτοῦ.
4:39b	σιώπα, περίμωσο.
1:26	καὶ σπαράξαν αὐτὸν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἀκάθαρτον καὶ φωνήσαν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ ἐξῆλθεν ἐξ αὐτοῦ.
4:39c	καὶ ἐκόπασεν ὁ ἄνεμος καὶ ἐγένετο γαλήνη μεγάλη.
—	—
4:40	καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· τί δειλοὶ ἐστε; οὐπω ἔχετε πίστιν;
1:27a	καὶ ἐθαμβήθησαν ἅπαντες ὥστε συζητεῖν πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς λέγοντας·
4:41a	καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν φόβον μέγαν καὶ ἔλεγον πρὸς ἀλλήλους·
1:27b	τί ἐστὶν τοῦτο; διδαχὴ καινὴ κατ’ ἐξουσίαν
4:41b	τίς ἄρα οὗτός ἐστιν
1:27c	καὶ τοῖς πνεύμασι τοῖς ἀκαθάρτοις ἐπιτάσσει, καὶ ὑπακούουσιν αὐτῷ.
4:41c	ὅτι καὶ ὁ ἄνεμος καὶ ἡ θάλασσα ὑπακούει αὐτῷ;

**Figure 5–4: Horizontal-Line Synopsis of Mark 1:25–27 and Mark 4:39–41**

Moreover, while ἐπιτιμάω occurs throughout Mark, φιμόω and ὑπακούω only occur in these two episodes, once in each. This is surprising given the number of exorcisms and exorcistic wonders Jesus performs where we might expect these words to appear. For example, we might expect Jesus to enjoin *silence* (φιμόω) upon the Gerasene demoniac following his outburst, τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, Ἰησοῦ (5:7b), which is essentially identical to the outburst of the synagogue demoniac that led to his being silenced, τί ἡμῖν καὶ σοί, Ἰησοῦ (1:24). The numerous verbal and structural parallels between the first halves of these episodes increases this expectation (Figure 5–5). The fact that φιμόω and ὑπακούω are exclusive to 1:21–28 and 4:35–51, when they might have been expected elsewhere, highlights the unique parallels between these episodes and supports an EXORCISM microcluster for the Sea Crossing motif.

Mark 1:23–25 // Mark 5:2, 7–8	
1:23a	καὶ εὐθὺς ἦν ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ αὐτῶν
5:2a	καὶ ... εὐθὺς ὑπήντησεν αὐτῷ ἐκ τῶν μνημείων
1:23b	ἄνθρωπος ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτω
5:2b	ἄνθρωπος ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτω
1:23b	ἀνέκραξεν λέγων·
5:7a	κράξας φωνῇ μεγάλῃ λέγει·
1:24a	τί ἡμῖν καὶ σοί, Ἰησοῦ Ναζαρηνέ;
5:7b	τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, Ἰησοῦ
1:24c*	οἶδά σε τίς εἶ, ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ.
5:7c	υἱὲ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου;
1:24b*	ἦλθες ἀπολέσαι ἡμᾶς;
5:7d	ὀρκίζω σε τὸν θεόν, μὴ με βασανίσῃς.
1:25a	καὶ ἐπετίμησεν αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγων·
5:8a	ἔλεγεν γὰρ αὐτῷ·
1:25b	φιμώθητι καὶ ἔξελθε ἐξ αὐτοῦ.
5:8b	ἔξελθε τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἀκάθαρτον ἐκ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

\*The sequence of 1:24b and 1:24c has been reversed.

**Figure 5–5: Horizontal-Line Synopsis of Mark 1:23–25 and Mark 5:2, 7–8**

*Other.* Two words fail to satisfy the criterion of association and neither belongs to a narrative grammar or microcluster, yet three instances of these common words are included in the associational cluster due to their uncommon usage. Κάθημαι and περιπατέω were identified because θάλασσα instantiates the Locative argument predicated by each verb: Jesus *sits on the sea* (καθῆσθαι ἐν τῇ θαλάσσῃ, 4:1), and Jesus *walks upon the sea* (περιπατῶν ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης, 6:48; ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης περιπατοῦντα, 6:49). Here κάθημαι and περιπατέω exhibit rather distinctive usages in their associations with θάλασσα, as people are not generally depicted as sitting or walking upon the sea. Of course, Jesus is not portrayed as sitting on the sea in the same literal manner that he is later portrayed as walking upon the sea, but the grammar is suggestive. Marcus wonders if readers might be reminded of the picture in Psalm 29 where YHWH's voice is upon the waters (29:3) and YHWH sits enthroned upon the flood (29:10).<sup>70</sup> If so, then in 4:1 Jesus is being portrayed with imagery exclusively associated with YHWH in the OT and so corresponds to Jesus' walking on the sea in 6:48–49, which also draws upon imagery exclusively associated with YHWH.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Marcus, "Mark," 291.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Job 9:8 (esp. LXX); Ps 77:19 (Marcus, *Mark*, 432).

This leads to the intriguing possibility that 4:1 and 6:48–49 are purposefully linked in the narrative via these divine images of sitting and walking upon the sea, support for which comes from the previous discussion of the parallel two-step progressions in 4:1 and 6:47 where the juxtaposition of θάλασσα and γῆ sets up a contrast between Jesus and other characters (Figure 5–2). Whatever the case, it seems advisable at this stage to include in the associational cluster the instances of κάθηναι (4:1) and περιπατέω (6:48, 49) that occur in their unique associations with θάλασσα.

*Excluded.* Eleven words fail to satisfy the criterion of association, and none belong to a narrative grammar or microcluster, and so all occurrences are excluded from the associational cluster: ἀφίημι, γίνομαι, εἰμί, ἐσθίω, εὐλογέω, ἔχω, λαμβάνω, λέγω, μέσος, μερίζω, and παρατίθημι.

#### CARRIERS OF THE SEA CROSSING MOTIF

The construction of the associational cluster of the Sea Crossing motif is now complete. Potential candidates were identified and then evaluated in order to determine which individual elements exhibit a greater probability of being carriers of the motif. We are now in a position to make some observations and draw some conclusions. There are sixteen episodes in which at least one member of the associational cluster resides. All sixteen episodes are located in the first half of Mark, with twelve in the Sea Crossing movement (Figure 5–6).

×	Reference	Episode
<b>13</b>	<b>1:16–20</b>	<b>Fishers of People</b>
3	1:21–28 (25, 27)	Capernaum Synagogue Exorcism
3	2:13–17 (13–14)	Calling of Levi
4	3:7–12 (7, 9)	Summary of Healings
6	4:1–34 (1)	Parables Discourse
<b>24</b>	<b>4:35–41</b>	<b>ESC<sup>1</sup> — Exorcism of the Wind and the Sea</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>5:1–20</b>	<b>Exorcism of the Gerasene Demoniac</b>
4	5:21–43 (21)	Hemorrhaging Woman; Jairus' Daughter
2	6:7–32 (32)	Mission of the Twelve; Herod and the Baptist
5	6:33–44	Feeding of the Five Thousand
<b>15</b>	<b>6:45–52</b>	<b>ESC<sup>2</sup> — Walking upon the Sea</b>
4	6:53–56 (53–54)	Summary of Healings
3	7:31–37 (31)	Healing of the Deaf Mute
1	8:1–9 (7)	Feeding of the Four Thousand

2	8:10–12 (10)	Pharisees' Demand for a Sign
4	8:13–21 (13–14)	<b>ESC<sup>3</sup> — Discussion about The Loaves</b>

The column headed by × indicates the number of occurrences of members of the associational cluster in an episode. Numbers in parentheses indicate the verses in which members are found when they are not distributed throughout the episode. Principal carriers of the Sea Crossing motif are **highlighted**.

**Figure 5–6: Carriers of the Sea Crossing Motif**

Four episodes stand out because they contain the highest concentration of individual members of the associational cluster: 1:16–20; 4:35–41 (ESC<sup>1</sup>); 5:1–20; and 6:45–52 (ESC<sup>2</sup>). Moreover, the cluster members are integral to what is going on within the episode, making these four episodes principal carriers of the Sea Crossing motif.

Mark 8:13–21 (ESC<sup>3</sup>) does not exhibit a high concentration of cluster elements, nor are those elements integral to what takes place within the episode. Nevertheless, ESC<sup>3</sup> will be treated as a principal carrier given its verbal and thematic connections with ESC<sup>1</sup> and ESC<sup>2</sup>, which clearly are principal carriers, and on account of the role the three ESCs share in structuring the Sea Crossing movement. This anomaly exposes a limitation in my method of establishing literary motifs, though not one that invalidates the whole approach. The fact is, a strong pattern is established in the first two ESCs that one would have expected to be followed in ESC<sup>3</sup>, but instead of storms and miraculous deeds, we get a discussion about loaves, which raises the question, “Why the difference?” While the method of establishing a literary motif through the construction of its associational cluster does not itself provide an answer, following this method has occasioned this important question. This suggests that the method is useful so long as it is not employed in an uncritical, number-crunching fashion. The method may not get us everything, but it does get us somewhere; after all, ESC<sup>3</sup> was still identified as a carrier of the Sea Crossing motif, just not a principal carrier.

In the remaining episodes, members of the associational cluster contribute little or nothing to the central action or thrust of the episodes, as is illustrated by the fact that in most cases, cluster members occur only on the fringes, only within the introductions and conclusions to the episodes. These episodes are, therefore, not principal carriers of the Sea Crossing motif. Nevertheless, the members themselves still play an important role within the Sea Crossing motif, to establish settings beside the sea or to narrate movements across the sea. Thus, the Sea Crossing motif contributes

to the Markan narrative in two ways: through episodes that function as principal carriers of the motif and through the recurrence of narrative settings beside, on, and across the sea. We shall now consider each of these contributions separately beginning with the latter.

## EXPLICATING THE SEA CROSSING MOTIF

### SETTINGS AND ITINERARIES

Common to Movements 1 and 2 (1:9–3:35; 4:1–8:30) is the recurrence of sea and boat language in the narrating of settings and itineraries. At the same time, M1 and M2 are distinguished by the manner in which this language occurs. In M1, the settings beside the sea are exchanged for settings on and across the sea in M2, and the boat as a stationary object beside the sea gives way to the boat as a means of transportation across the sea. In M1, the Sea and Boat motifs are relatively distinct, while in M2 they are integrated into a single motif, the Sea Crossing motif proper. The transition into the Sea Crossing motif occurs in 4:1–2 where Jesus teaches crowds *beside the sea* while sitting *on the sea*, his having embarked in *the boat* that will be used in all journeys *across the sea*. To the sea crossings we now turn.

In Mark, the sea crossings perform a dual function. They “are structural devices for the organization of the narrative *and* important symbolic actions in and of themselves.”<sup>72</sup> The function of the sea crossings as structural devices has already been addressed Chapter 3; it now remains to consider their symbolic function. Here, I am not so much concerned with what occurs during a sea crossing as in the case of the ESCs; that discussion will come later. Instead, I am concerned with their symbolic function as itineraries detailing the movements of Jesus and his disciples. As will become increasingly apparent, the sea crossings belong to a rhetorical strategy concerned with the disciples and mission. What follows, then, is an argument that establishes the itinerary of Jesus and the disciples throughout the Sea Crossing movement, the goal being the determination of where episodes occur in relation to geopolitical space. That is, does an episode occur in Jewish space, in Gentile space, or somewhere in between? Attention is focused upon how the author guides the reader in making these determinations.

---

<sup>72</sup> Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis, 1988), 194.

*A Note on Terminology Related to the Sea Crossings.* Up to this point, the six sea crossings have been classified according to whether an episode on the sea is narrated during the crossing itself, leading to a distinction between an *episodic (or eventful) sea crossing* (ESC) and an *uneventful sea crossing* (USC). In the following discussion, two additional classifications are employed. Sea crossings that begin and end on the same geopolitical side of the sea are *partial sea crossings* (PSCs), while those that begin and end on the opposite side of the sea are *full sea crossings* (FSCs). Each of these classifications is given additional precision by taking into consideration the trajectory of the sea crossing. A FSC that departs from the western, Jewish shore and arrives on the eastern, Gentile shore is a *Jewish-to-Gentile sea crossing* (JGSC); its counterpart is a *Gentile-to-Jewish sea crossing* (GJSC). Similarly, a PSC that begins and ends on the western shore is a *Jewish-to-Jewish sea crossing* (JJSC) whereas one that begins and ends on the eastern shore is a *Gentile-to-Gentile sea crossing* (GGSC). To complete the picture, *land crossing* (LC) designates the movements over land that begin and end on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

#### THE ITINERARY OF WERNER H. KELBER

We begin our discussion with an examination of the itinerary proposed by Werner Kelber. Although it has already been successfully refuted by Malbon, it offers significant points of contrast with the itinerary proposed here and helps bring into sharper relief issues that are fundamental to my overall thesis. Kelber's itinerary will be presented fully and then examined afterwards.

#### *Kelber's Itinerary*

**SC<sup>1</sup> = JGSC.** From 1:14 to 4:34, Jesus operates exclusively within Galilee. So, when he and his disciples embark on their first voyage, they do so from the western, Jewish shore. For Kelber, Mark's use of εἰς τὸ πέραν and/or διαπεράω "introduce the all-important crossing motif. Judiciously spaced throughout 4:35–8:21, the terms signal an actual crossing of the lake, be it from the western bank to an area east of the lake, or vice versa."<sup>73</sup> Consequently, when Jesus says, "Let us pass through εἰς τὸ πέραν" (4:35) and they come εἰς τὸ πέραν τῆς θαλάσσης (5:1), the reader is to un-

---

<sup>73</sup> Kelber, *Kingdom*, 48.

derstand that they have made a FSC to the eastern, Gentile shore, which is confirmed by the “Gentile coloring of the territory.”<sup>74</sup>

**SC<sup>2</sup> = GJSC.** Following his exorcism of the Gerasene demoniac, Jesus and his disciples *cross* (διαπεράσαντος) again εἰς τὸ πέραν (5:21). The crossing signals designate another FSC and thus a return to the Jewish side of the sea; this is confirmed by its “recognizably Jewish milieu.”<sup>75</sup> From 5:22 to 6:31, they make their way around Galilee.

**SC<sup>3</sup> = JJSC.** Upon the disciples’ return from their Galilean mission, Jesus and the disciples attempt to get away to a lonely place by boat (6:32). The absence of διαπεράω and εἰς τὸ πέραν indicates that this is not a FSC but simply a PSC, one that begins and ends on the western, Jewish shore.

**SC<sup>4</sup> = JGSC.** Following the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus sends the disciples off in the boat alone. This is a full JGSC, demonstrated by the fact that εἰς τὸ πέραν introduces their journey (6:45) and διαπεράσαντες concludes it (6:53).<sup>76</sup> Consequently, the summary of Jesus’ healings in 6:54–56 is a description of his ministry among Gentiles, which indicates “the kingdom has arrived in full on the eastern shore.”<sup>77</sup> The ensuing debate with the Pharisees and scribes over matters of ritual purity also takes place in Gentile territory (7:1–23).

**LC = GGLC.** From there Jesus withdraws to the region of Tyre, where he encounters the Syrophoenician woman. He then travels within Gentile territory eventually returning to the eastern shore where he heals a deaf mute and feeds four thousand.

**SC<sup>5</sup> = GGSC.** Afterwards, Jesus and his disciples embark on their fifth sea crossing (8:10), “which cannot be considered a trip back to the west shore, because the crossing signals [i.e., εἰς τὸ πέραν and διαπεράω] are absent.”<sup>78</sup> Instead, this is a PSC that begins and ends on the eastern, Gentile shore. Upon arrival Jesus is once again confronted by Pharisees in Gentile territory, who demand a sign from Jesus.

**SC<sup>6</sup> = GJSC.** Jesus refuses their request, and getting back into the boat, he and his disciples complete their last sea crossing, a FSC that takes them back to the Jewish side of the sea as indicated by the presence of εἰς τὸ πέραν (8:13).

---

<sup>74</sup> Kelber, *Kingdom*, 51.

<sup>75</sup> Kelber, *Kingdom*, 52.

<sup>76</sup> Kelber, *Kingdom*, 57.

<sup>77</sup> Kelber, *Kingdom*, 58.

<sup>78</sup> Kelber, *Kingdom*, 61.

Thus, out of Mark's six sea crossings, Kelber identifies four as FSCs and two as PSCs. Between SC<sup>4</sup> and SC<sup>5</sup> Jesus travels through Gentile territory beginning and ending on the eastern, Gentile shore. Thus, the geopolitical movements of Jesus in the Sea Crossing movement occur in the following narrative sequence: JG, GJ, JJ, JG, GG, GG, GJ (Figure 5–7).<sup>79</sup>

	ESC	USC	FSC	PSC	JG	GJ	JJ	GG	εἰς τὸ πέραν	διαπεράω
SC <sup>1</sup>	ESC <sup>1</sup>		FSC		JG				xx	
SC <sup>2</sup>		USC	FSC			GJ			x	x
SC <sup>3</sup>		USC		PSC			JJ			
SC <sup>4</sup>	ESC <sup>2</sup>		FSC		JG				x	x
LC								GG		
SC <sup>5</sup>		USC		PSC				GG		
SC <sup>6</sup>	ESC <sup>3</sup>		FSC			GJ			x	

**Figure 5–7: Kelber's Itinerary for Mark 4:1–8:30**

#### *Kelber's Itinerary Examined*

Kelber's itinerary exhibits a number of problems, most of which stem from his reliance upon his so-called *crossing signals*. Kelber assumes that the presence of διαπεράω and/or εἰς τὸ πέραν to be indicative of a FSC, yet he never offers any arguments as to why they should be so regarded. Moreover, he also treats their absence as indicating that a FSC has not occurred, which is not the logical inverse of his first assumption. His itinerary thus rests precariously upon two assumptions he never defends. Even more problematic is his “over-reliance”<sup>80</sup> upon these crossing signals to the exclusion of all other narrative markers that assist the reader in determining which side of the sea crossings begin and end on. Kelber's exclusive reliance upon the presence or absence of these crossing signals results in a number of geographical problems that he must then try to solve; especially problematic are his fourth and fifth sea crossings.

**SC<sup>5</sup>.** The fifth sea crossing is a USC narrated in a single sentence, καὶ εὐθὺς ἐμβὰς εἰς τὸ πλοῖον μετὰ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ ἦλθεν εἰς τὰ μέρη Δαλμανουθά

<sup>79</sup> Like Kelber, Petersen treats SC<sup>1</sup>, SC<sup>2</sup>, SC<sup>4</sup>, and SC<sup>6</sup> as FSCs due to the presence of εἰς τὸ πέραν and SC<sup>3</sup> and SC<sup>5</sup> as PSCs on account of its absence (“Composition,” 195). Yet, he never discusses what side of the sea these journeys begin and end on, and so it is impossible to determine whether his itinerary matches Kelber's.

<sup>80</sup> Smith, “Bethsaida via Gennesaret,” 363.



(8:10). Since neither διαπεράω or εἰς τὸ πέραν are present, Kelber concludes that SC<sup>5</sup> must be a PSC, a side trip beginning and ending on the eastern, Gentile shore. Noticeably absent from Kelber's discussion is any mention of Dalmanutha, and while Dalmanutha is problematic, its being a place name unknown outside Mark,<sup>81</sup> it is textually reliable, and one expects geopolitical designations to be considered when establishing itineraries. Moreover, by identifying the destination as Gentile, Kelber has introduced two anomalies into the narrative. First, Jesus is approached by Pharisees in Gentile territory (8:11–12); more on this below. Second, since the subsequent sea crossing is a FSC, it must logically terminate on the western shore; yet, this is contradicted by the fact that the destination is explicitly identified as Bethsaida, which is on the eastern shore. Kelber acknowledges this discrepancy, but, as we shall see, attributes it to Mark's rearrangement of his sources. If, however, Kelber would have recognized SC<sup>5</sup> as a FSC then neither of these inconsistencies would have arisen. Jesus would encounter Jewish opponents on Jewish soil, and the last sea crossing would conclude on the eastern shore where Bethsaida is located.

**SC<sup>4</sup>.** Similar problems are found in Kelber's treatment of the fourth sea crossing, which begins, καὶ εὐθὺς ἠνάγκασεν τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ ἐμβῆναι εἰς τὸ πλοῖον καὶ προάγειν εἰς τὸ πέραν πρὸς Βηθσαϊδάν (6:45a), and ends, καὶ διαπεράσαντες ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ἦλθον εἰς Γεννησαρὲτ καὶ προσωρμίσθησαν (6:53). According to Kelber, the presence of εἰς τὸ πέραν and διαπεράσαντες "leave no doubt as to the reality of the crossing," meaning that SC<sup>4</sup> is a JGSC. At the same time, Kelber acknowledges that their arrival on the eastern shore "causes a noted difficulty in the itinerary;" the intended destination was Bethsaida, yet they land at Gennesaret.<sup>82</sup> He explains the discrepancy as a result of Mark's rearrangement of his sources, specifically the two miracle catenae proposed by Achtemeier, wherein the healing of the blind man that takes place outside Bethsaida (8:22–26) originally followed Jesus' walking upon the sea with its reference to Bethsaida (6:45–52).<sup>83</sup> Yet even if he and Achtemeier are correct about the origins of the Bethsaida-Gennesaret discrepancy in Mark's narrative, it still does not support Kelber's assertion that Jesus disembarks in Gentile terri-

<sup>81</sup> James F. Strange, "Dalmanutha," *ABD* 2:4.

<sup>82</sup> Kelber, *Kingdom*, 58.

<sup>83</sup> Kelber, *Kingdom*, 58; Achtemeier, "Toward," 181–87.

tory, for this source-critical theory does not explain why a reader would or should treat διαπεράσαντες “as a stronger marker than the proper noun Gennesaret.”<sup>84</sup>

The result is that Jewish opponents appear in Gentile territory (7:1), the unexpectedness of which Kelber himself acknowledges, when he says, “the arrival of the Jerusalem delegation . . . does not transport us back to Galilee.”<sup>85</sup> Kelber attempts to provide a rationale for this unusual setting, arguing that “the ‘Gentile issue’ must be argued out on Gentile ground,”<sup>86</sup> yet this merely begs the question. Ultimately, Kelber’s treatment of the sea crossings fails because he never demonstrates how the reader is expected to know that εἰς τὸ πέραν and διαπεράω are narrative markers that trump all others in establishing the course of a sea crossing.<sup>87</sup> In the end, Kelber’s exclusive reliance upon these “crossing signals” creates more problems than it solves. To achieve better results one should consider a broader range of features in the narrative that assist the reader in determining Jesus’ movements within Markan geopolitical space. To this we now turn.

#### THE ITINERARY PROPOSED BY THIS STUDY

##### *Geopolitical Space in Mark*

In her treatment of geopolitical space in Mark, Malbon makes three points: the author consistently distinguishes Jewish and Gentile space, the author distinguishes the western and eastern sides of the Sea of Galilee, and the western side of the sea is characterized as Jewish space and the eastern side as Gentile space.<sup>88</sup> This distinction between Jewish and Gentile space in Mark is achieved through a variety of narrative markers that convey religious, ethnic, and cultural information. The Jewish character of a narrative setting “is suggested by Mark in two ways: (1) the presence there of

---

<sup>84</sup> Malbon, “Jesus,” 371.

<sup>85</sup> Kelber, *Kingdom*, 58.

<sup>86</sup> Kelber, *Kingdom*, 58.

<sup>87</sup> The rationale for Kelber’s exclusive reliance upon these crossing signals is unclear, but one suspects he does so because he regards them as largely redactional, in contrast to the place names, which he assumes Mark has simply taken over from his sources. If so, then Kelber has fallen prey to one of the occupational hazards of a redaction critic, namely, deriving more significance from a redactor’s modification of his sources than from a redactor’s adoption of his sources. For Malbon, Kelber’s thesis is weakened by the fact that he bases it on “the possible arrangement of traditional material” instead of the narrative that results from such arrangement (Malbon, “Jesus,” 372).

<sup>88</sup> Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *Narrative Space and Mythic Meaning in Mark* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 40–44.

Jewish centers of worship and (2) the presence there of Jewish religious leaders.”<sup>89</sup> Thus, only in Jewish settings does the reader encounter synagogues, the temple, priests, elders, scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees.<sup>90</sup> Gentile settings are distinguished by their inherent foreignness from a Jewish perspective. For example, the presence of swineherds and larger numbers of swine in 5:1–20 highlight its Gentile character. By following these and other narrative markers, it becomes clear that for the author Galilee and Judea are symbolically Jewish while everything outside these spaces is symbolically Gentile.

Smith concurs with Malbon that Mark “conceives of two distinct sides to the lake,” but thinks it far from certain that the two sides are to be regarded as ethnically-specific since “historically speaking” Galilee boasted a large Gentile population in the first century.<sup>91</sup> Here Smith is appealing to the theory of a Gentile Galilee, a theory that has been seriously challenged more recently.<sup>92</sup> Yet, even if Smith is correct about Galilee’s Gentile population, it does not in itself present a challenge to Malbon’s thesis because her observations “have reference solely to the *narrative* settings” and are independent of “the question of whether archaeological excavations support such an ethnographic division of the *socio-historical* setting.”<sup>93</sup> This is not to advocate an approach to narrative criticism that emphasizes the autonomy of the text to the exclusion of extratextual realities, historical or otherwise. It simply highlights the fact that what takes place within a text is not necessarily reflective of the realities outside the text, even of the realities that gave rise to the text. Of course, if it could be demonstrated that Jews were not resident in Galilee in the first century, then a reading of Mark that identified Galilee as Jewish would be seriously suspect, though it would still have to be shown on narrative grounds that such a reading was unjustified. Current evidence from first-century Galilee suggests a mixed population, yet determining which groups were in the majority does not decide for us whether the Markan author characterizes Galilee as Jewish, Gentile, or mixed. First-century

---

<sup>89</sup> Malbon, *Narrative Space*, 40.

<sup>90</sup> The sole exception in the entire gospel is the appearance of scribes near Caesarea Philippi (9:14). Yet, one anomaly does not invalidate the pattern that is operative in the rest of the narrative.

<sup>91</sup> Smith, “Bethsaida via Gennesaret,” 364–5.

<sup>92</sup> For a survey of recent research see Mark Rapinchuk, “The Galilee and Jesus in Recent Research,” *CurBR* 2 (2004): 197–222.

<sup>93</sup> Jesper Svartvik, *Mark and Mission: Mk 7:1–23 in its Narrative and Historical Contexts* (ConBNT 32; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2000), 239.

Galilee was contested space,<sup>94</sup> making it quite probable that contemporaries regarded the ethnic and cultural identity of Galilee very differently.

By following Malbon's lead in constructing an itinerary on the basis of narrative markers that characterize and distinguish Jewish and Gentile spaces, we arrive at an itinerary of the Sea Crossing movement that avoids the anomalies of Kelber's approach, solves problems that have long been debated, and most importantly is easily discerned by the reader.<sup>95</sup>

### *Proposed Itinerary*

From 1:14 to 4:34, the action has taken place exclusively in Galilee, whose Jewishness is obvious via the multiple references to synagogues (1:21, 23, 29, 39; 3:1) and the Sabbath (1:21; 2:23, 24, 27ab, 28; 3:2, 4) and the presence of priests (1:44), scribes (2:6, 16; 3:22), and Pharisees (2:16, 18ab, 24; 3:6). Thus, the first sea crossing commences from the western, Jewish shore of the Sea of Galilee.

**SC<sup>1</sup> = JGSC.** When Jesus says to his disciples, "Let us pass through εἰς τὸ πέραν" (4:35), the reader anticipates a sea crossing to the opposite, non-Galilean shore. The successful completion of this FSC is confirmed by their arrival εἰς τὸ πέραν τῆς θαλάσσης (5:1), which is the eastern, Gentile side of the sea as is clear from the references to Gerasa (5:1), the Decapolis (5:20), swine (5:11, 12, 13, 16), and swineherds (5:14).

**SC<sup>2</sup> = GJSC.** Following his exorcism of the Gerasene demoniac, Jesus and his disciples *cross over* (διαπεράσαντος; 5:21) εἰς τὸ πέραν. The return to the Jewish side of the sea is signaled by the arrival of Jairus, a leader of the local synagogue (5:22). Moreover, as Jesus makes his way inland he comes to his hometown (6:1), which the reader knows is Nazareth of Galilee (1:9).

---

<sup>94</sup> Contested spaces are defined as "geographic locations where conflicts in the form of opposition, confrontation, subversion, and/or resistance engage actors whose social positions are defined by differential control of resources and access to power." Setha M. Low and Denise Lawrence-Zúñiga, "Locating Culture," in *Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture* (ed. Setha M. Low and Denise Lawrence-Zúñiga; Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 18.

<sup>95</sup> "[B]oth the author and intended audience of Mark would be very sensitive to Jewish versus Gentile markers and signals. . . . Because of clear narrative signals and the intended reader's high sensitivity to these signals, he or she would be able to discern within the narrative of Mark just at what point Jesus was on Jewish as opposed to foreign and Gentile territory" (Wefald, "Separate Gentile Mission in Mark: A Narrative Explanation of Markan Geography, the Two Feeding Accounts and Exorcisms," *JSNT* 60 (1995): 9).

**SC<sup>3</sup> = JJSC.** Following the disciples' successful Galilean mission, Jesus and the disciples attempt to get away to a secluded spot by boat (6:32). Unfortunately, as they depart, people recognize them and run on ahead. Since the people arrived ahead of them *on foot*, the sea crossing (which incidentally lacks any reference to εἰς τὸ πέραν or διαπεράω) is to be understood as a PSC that begins and ends on the Jewish shore, which is confirmed via markers of the crowd's Jewishness, as, for example, in their being characterized as like "sheep without a shepherd" (6:34; Num 27:17).

**SC<sup>4</sup> = JJSC.** Following the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus forces the disciples to embark in the boat and to go εἰς τὸ πέραν to Bethsaida, that is, to the eastern, Gentile shore (6:45).<sup>96</sup> The disciples struggle against an adverse wind, and eventually Jesus comes to them walking upon the sea. After he gets into the boat, the wind ceases, but when they *cross over* to land (διαπεράσαντες), they arrive at Genesaret (6:53). That is, they do not arrive at their intended Gentile destination but arrive instead at a Jewish destination. The meaning of this aborted, detoured, or failed sea crossing will be discussed later, but whatever the cause, the itinerary is really quite clear. What was intended as a FSC/JGSC turned into a PSC/JJSC. Beyond the place name Genesaret, the Jewish character of this space is born out in the subsequent episode where Jesus debates Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem (7:1) on matters of ritual purity that were of particular concern to Jews (7:3–4).

**LC = JGLC.** After the purity debate, Jesus withdraws from Galilee into Gentile territory to the region of Tyre (7:24). Jesus then makes a "tour of Gentile regions"<sup>97</sup> following a circuitous route through Sidon and the middle of the Decapolis finally arriving on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee (7:31).<sup>98</sup> Thus, all of the episodes in 7:24–8:10 take place in Gentile territory. The introduction of a Greek woman of Sy-

---

<sup>96</sup> "Bethsaida is clearly marked in the text as being on 'the other side' of the sea (6:45; 8:13, 22) from Galilee, that is, beyond the borders of Galilee." Malbon, *Narrative Space*, 42. Additional evidence is offered below for the claim that Bethsaida represents Gentile space in Mark.

<sup>97</sup> Marcus, *Mark*, 477.

<sup>98</sup> Mark 7:31 has been the source of much scholarly debate. Many solutions have been proposed to account for an itinerary that many find confused and confusing (for summaries of proposed solutions see Guelich, *Mark*, 391–93; Gundry, *Mark*, 386–88; Marcus, *Mark*, 472). Problems arise when interpreters assume that 7:31 describes a direct journey from Tyre to the Sea of Galilee, a view reflected in some well-known English translations that designate this as a *return* journey (NRSV, RSV, ESV, NJB, cf. NLT), despite the fact that *return* does not reside in the Greek. Thus, Wefald's attempt to solve this purported problem by arguing that *returned* does not have to be understood as an immediately return is unnecessary ("Separate Gentile Mission," 12n27). While I grant that the syntax is somewhat convoluted, it is easy enough to follow. Mark is simply informing the reader that Jesus and his disciples are traveling throughout Gentile space.

rophoenician origin reflects a Gentile setting, as do the Gentile place names. Yet, equally indicative of the Gentile setting of 7:24–8:10 is what is absent, namely, any references to Jewish leaders or Jewish places of worship, which are prevalent in Galilee, both before and after this “land crossing.”

**SC<sup>5</sup> = GJSC.** Following the feeding of the four thousand, Jesus and his disciples take the boat to the district of Dalmanutha (8:10). Given that this name never occurs outside Mark’s gospel, it is unclear whether early readers of Mark would have understood Dalmanutha to designate a Jewish setting, but the presence of Pharisees removes any doubt that a FSC from the west to the east has occurred, despite the absence of εἰς τὸ πέραν. Moreover, this itinerary for SC<sup>5</sup> is consistent with the itinerary for SC<sup>6</sup>.

**SC<sup>6</sup> = JGSC.** Jesus refuses to accede to the Pharisees demand for a sign, and so after the briefest of stays on the Jewish side of the sea, Jesus and his disciples depart in the boat εἰς τὸ πέραν (8:13), which terminates at Bethsaida (8:22), the Gentile village on the eastern shore that the disciples previously failed to reach. Here, the account of Jesus’ healing of the blind man is nearly identical in structure and language as the prior account of his healing of the deaf mute, which took place in Gentile territory and so supports a Gentile setting. Moreover, following the healing Jesus and his disciples make their way to the Gentile villages of Caesarea Philippi.

Thus, out of Mark’s six sea crossings, I identify four as FSCs and two as PSCs. Between SC<sup>4</sup> and SC<sup>5</sup> Jesus travels through Gentile territory beginning on the western, Jewish side of the sea and ending on the eastern, Gentile side. Thus, the six sea crossings and the one land crossing occur in the following narrative sequence: JG, GJ, JJ, JJ, JG, GJ, JG (Figure 5–8).

	ESC	USC	FSC	PSC	JG	GJ	JJ	GG	εἰς τὸ πέραν	διαπεράω
<b>SC<sup>1</sup></b>	ESC <sup>1</sup>		FSC		JG				xx	
<b>SC<sup>2</sup></b>		USC	FSC			GJ			x	x
<b>SC<sup>3</sup></b>		USC		PSC			JJ			
<b>SC<sup>4</sup></b>	ESC <sup>2</sup>		<del>FSC</del>	PSC	<del>JG</del>		JJ		x	x
<b>LC</b>					JG					
<b>SC<sup>5</sup></b>		USC	FSC			GJ				
<b>SC<sup>6</sup></b>	ESC <sup>3</sup>		FSC		JG				x	

~~FSC~~ and ~~JG~~ indicate the intended (vs. actual) itinerary of SC<sup>4</sup>.

**Figure 5–8: Proposed Itinerary for Mark 4:1–8:30**

Fowler, Malbon, Smith, and Wefald are in complete agreement with this itinerary, whereas Kelber and I disagree over the last three sea crossings (Figure 5–9).

	Proposed Itinerary						Kelber's Itinerary					
	FSC	PSC	JG	GJ	JJ	GG	FSC	PSC	JG	GJ	JJ	GG
SC <sup>1</sup>	FSC		JG				FSC		JG			
SC <sup>2</sup>	FSC			GJ			FSC			GJ		
SC <sup>3</sup>		PSC			JJ			PSC			JJ	
SC <sup>4</sup>	<del>FSC</del>	PSC	<del>JG</del>		JJ		FSC		JG			
LC			JG									GG
SC <sup>5</sup>	FSC			GJ				PSC				GG
SC <sup>6</sup>	FSC		JG				FSC			GJ		

FSC and ~~JG~~ indicate the intended (vs. actual) itinerary of SC<sup>4</sup>.  
Shading indicates differences between itineraries.

**Figure 5–9: Comparison of Itineraries for Mark 4:1–8:30**

Given this itinerary, what can be said concerning Kelber's so-called "crossing signals"? First, εἰς τὸ πέραν always designates an actual (or intended) FSC; yet, a FSC can occur without its being used, as is the case with SC<sup>5</sup> (so Wefald).<sup>99</sup> In other words, εἰς τὸ πέραν always signals a FSC, but not exclusively so. On the other hand, διαπεράω merely signals the occurrence of a sea crossing; it does not distinguish a FSC from a PSC (contra Wefald).<sup>100</sup> Thus, Mark uses εἰς τὸ πέραν and διαπεράω in a consistent manner, albeit in a manner different from that assumed by Kelber.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Wefald, "Separate Gentile Mission," 8.

<sup>100</sup> Wefald follows Kelber in arguing that FSCs occur whenever εἰς τὸ πέραν or διαπεράω is present, though he differs with Kelber concerning the itinerary for SC<sup>4</sup>. He argues that while "the signals do occur in 6:45–53, they are there to be treated as the intended narrative action which is then interrupted by the disciples' fears" ("Separate Gentile Mission," 9). Wefald is partially correct. Only εἰς τὸ πέραν (6:45) can be interpreted as signaling the "intended narrative action." Wefald's comments do not work for διαπεράω (6:53) since it belongs to the statement identifying the actual destination not the intended destination; Wefald's itinerary is correct though not his understanding of διαπεράω.

<sup>101</sup> It should be acknowledged that Kelber's understanding of εἰς τὸ πέραν represents a significant advance over most of Kelber's contemporaries who consistently argued that, in Mark, εἰς τὸ πέραν always indicated a sea crossing to the eastern, Gentile shore (Kelber, *Kingdom*, 48n11), a position maintained even when it makes a mockery of Markan geography. For example, so strong was the view that εἰς τὸ πέραν denoted Gentile territory that Schreiber, while acknowledging that the sea crossing in 5:21 ends on the western shore, nevertheless concludes that because Mark has linked the first (4:35, 5:1) and second (5:21) sea crossings by means of εἰς τὸ πέραν, "it becomes clear that 5:21ff also takes place in Gentile territory" because "the 'Galilean Sea' is the center of Gentile territories, as 7:31, in particular, clearly says" [wird deutlich, daß auch 5:21ff im heidnischen Gebiet spielt, d. h. das »galiläische Meer« ist, wie 7:31 besonders deutlich sagt, das Zentrum heidnischer Gebiete] (*Theologie des Vertrauens: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung des Markusevangeliums* (Hamburg: Furcht-Verlag, 1967), 206).

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSED ITINERARY

The following discussion draws out some of the implications of the proposed itinerary that undergird later arguments regarding the characterization of the Markan disciples in the Sea Crossing movement.

### *The Narrative Grammar of the Sea Crossings*

We begin with an analysis of the narrative grammar of the sea crossings, an examination of the vocabulary, syntax, and semantics of the language used to narrate the crossings to see if any patterns emerge. In Mark, the sea crossings are constructed using four basic statements: embarking (EM), departure (D), arrival (A), and disembarking (DEM) statements. Not every crossing exhibits all four components. In fact, one of the differences between the ESCs and the USCs is that the USCs only ever have two of the elements, whereas the ESCs generally have all four. Figure 5–10 presents the SEA CROSSING grammar in narrative sequence while Figure 5–11 organizes the same information according to the four different types of statements.<sup>102</sup>

---

<sup>102</sup> This treatment of the SEA CROSSING narrative grammar further develops observations made by Fowler in his excursus on the boat motif in Mark (*Loaves and Fishes*, 57–68).



<b>SC<sup>1</sup></b>			<b>ESC<sup>1</sup> • FSC • JGSC</b>
EM	4:1b	ὥστε αὐτὸν εἰς πλοῖον ἐμβάντα	
D	4:35b, 36b	διέλθωμεν εἰς τὸ πέραν ... παραλαμβάνουσιν αὐτὸν ὡς ἦν ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ	
ESC	4:37–41	[Exorcism of the Wind and the Sea]	
A	5:1	καὶ ἦλθον εἰς τὸ πέραν τῆς θαλάσσης εἰς τὴν χώραν τῶν Γερασηνῶν	
DEM	5:2a	καὶ ἐξελθόντος αὐτοῦ ἐκ τοῦ πλοίου εὐθὺς ὑπήντησεν αὐτῷ	
<b>SC<sup>2</sup></b>			<b>USC • FSC • GJSC</b>
EM	5:18a	καὶ ἐμβαίνοντος αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸ πλοῖον	
	5:18b–20	[Jesus' refusal of demoniac's request to be with him]	
A	5:21a	καὶ διαπεράσαντος τοῦ Ἰησοῦ [ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ] πάλιν εἰς τὸ πέραν	
<b>SC<sup>3</sup></b>			<b>USC • PSC • JJSC</b>
D	6:32	καὶ ἀπῆλθον ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ εἰς ἔρημον τόπον κατ' ἰδίαν	
	6:33	[Movement of the crowd]	
DEM	6:34a	καὶ ἐξελθῶν	
<b>SC<sup>4</sup></b>			<b>ESC<sup>2</sup> • FSG/PSC • JGSG/JJSC</b>
EM	6:45a	καὶ εὐθὺς ἠνάγκασεν τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ ἐμβῆναι εἰς τὸ πλοῖον	
D	6:45b	προάγειν εἰς τὸ πέραν πρὸς Βηθσαϊδάν	
ESC	6:46–52	[Walking upon the Sea]	
EM	6:51a	καὶ ἀνέβη πρὸς αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ πλοῖον	
A	6:53a	καὶ διαπεράσαντες ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ἦλθον εἰς Γεννησαρετ	
DEM	6:54a	καὶ ἐξελθόντων αὐτῶν ἐκ τοῦ πλοίου εὐθὺς ἐπιγνόντες αὐτὸν	
<b>SC<sup>5</sup></b>			<b>USC • FSC • GJSC</b>
EM	8:10a	καὶ εὐθὺς ἐμβὰς εἰς τὸ πλοῖον μετὰ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ	
A	8:10b	ἦλθεν εἰς τὰ μέρη Δαλμανουθά	
<b>SC<sup>6</sup></b>			<b>ESC<sup>3</sup> • FSC • JGSC</b>
EM	8:13a	καὶ ἀφείς αὐτοὺς πάλιν ἐμβὰς	
D	8:13b, 14	ἀπῆλθεν εἰς τὸ πέραν ... ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ	
ESC	8:14–21	[Discussion about the Loaves]	
A	8:22a	καὶ ἔρχονται εἰς Βηθσαϊδάν	

**Figure 5–10: The SEA CROSSING Narrative Grammar, Organized by Sea Crossing**

EMBARKING		
SC <sup>1</sup>	4:1b	ὥστε αὐτὸν εἰς πλοῖον ἐμβάντα
SC <sup>2</sup>	5:18a	καὶ ἐμβαίνοντος αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸ πλοῖον
SC <sup>4</sup>	6:45a	καὶ εὐθὺς ἠνάγκασεν τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ ἐμβῆναι εἰς τὸ πλοῖον
	6:51a	καὶ ἀνέβη πρὸς αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ πλοῖον
SC <sup>5</sup>	8:10a	καὶ εὐθὺς ἐμβὰς εἰς τὸ πλοῖον μετὰ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ
SC <sup>6</sup>	8:13a	καὶ ἄφεις αὐτοὺς πάλιν ἐμβὰς
DEPARTURE		
SC <sup>1</sup>	4:35b, 36b	διέλθωμεν εἰς τὸ πέραν ... παραλαμβάνουσιν αὐτὸν ὡς ἦν ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ
SC <sup>3</sup>	6:32	καὶ ἀπῆλθον ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ εἰς ἔρημον τόπον κατ' ἰδίαν
SC <sup>4</sup>	6:45b	προάγειν εἰς τὸ πέραν πρὸς Βηθσαϊδάν
SC <sup>6</sup>	8:13b, 14	ἀπῆλθεν εἰς τὸ πέραν ... ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ
ARRIVAL		
SC <sup>1</sup>	5:1	καὶ ἦλθον εἰς τὸ πέραν τῆς θαλάσσης εἰς τὴν χώραν τῶν Γερασηνῶν
SC <sup>2</sup>	5:21a	καὶ διαπεράσαντος τοῦ Ἰησοῦ [ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ] πάλιν εἰς τὸ πέραν
SC <sup>4</sup>	6:53a	καὶ διαπεράσαντες ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ἦλθον εἰς Γεννησαρετ
SC <sup>5</sup>	8:10b	ἦλθεν εἰς τὰ μέρη Δαλμανουθά
SC <sup>6</sup>	8:22a	καὶ ἔρχονται εἰς Βηθσαϊδάν
DISEMBARKING		
SC <sup>1</sup>	5:2a	καὶ ἐξελθόντος αὐτοῦ ἐκ τοῦ πλοίου εὐθὺς ὑπήντησεν αὐτῷ
SC <sup>3</sup>	6:34a	καὶ ἐξελθὼν
SC <sup>4</sup>	6:54a	καὶ ἐξελθόντων αὐτῶν ἐκ τοῦ πλοίου εὐθὺς ἐπιγινόντες αὐτὸν

The ESCs are **highlighted**.

**Figure 5–11: The SEA CROSSING Narrative Grammar, Organized by Statement Type**

A number of interesting observations could be made regarding the SEA CROSSING narrative grammar, but comments will be limited to those elements that are most relevant to this study.

Five of the six sea crossings include an embarking statement, and interestingly, it is the actual or intended FSCs that contain an embarking statement. The embarking statements are formed using a cognate of βαίνω accompanied by εἰς [τὸ] πλοῖον, which instantiates its required Goal complement; only in 8:13 is εἰς τὸ πλοῖον permissibly absent. SC<sup>4</sup> is unique in having two embarking statements, one where the disciples are the subject (6:45) and one where Jesus is (6:51). Here, the employment of ἀναβαίνω, instead of the expected ἐμβαίνω, highlights the uniqueness of Jesus' embarking in the boat in the middle of the sea. This pattern in the embarking statements is one of the reasons for including the parables discourse (4:2–34) within the Sea Crossing movement. As the pattern suggests, Jesus' embarking in the

boat in 4:1 is not done solely in order to address a large crowd but in anticipation of the first sea crossing, which ensues following the parables discourse. Although less frequent, the disembarking statements follow a pattern similar to that of the embarking statements. They are formed by ἐξέρχομαι (as an aorist participle) accompanied by its required Source complement, ἐκ τοῦ πλοίου; in 6:34, ἐκ τοῦ πλοίου is possibly absent.

The departure and arrival statements exhibit similarities, much as the embarking and disembarking statements do. The departures and arrivals are generally formed with a cognate of ἔρχομαι (all occurring in the aorist save the final one), with ἔρχομαι used in the arrivals, and ἀπέρχομαι and διέρχομαι in the departures; διαπεράω always occurs as a genitive absolute. If the boat is ever mentioned, it is always ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ. Common to both is the identification of the destination introduced by εἰς. Yet, whereas in the arrival statements, the destinations are generally specific, that is, identified with a proper name, in the departure statements the destinations are typically generic. The one notable exception is the occurrence of πρὸς Βηθσαϊδάν in the departure statement of SC<sup>4</sup>, to which we shall return shortly.

This analysis of the SEA CROSSING grammar reveals a number of patterns in the language and structures used to narrate the sea crossings. These patterns reflect a remarkably consistent employment of vocabulary and forms, which suggests a significant degree of intentionality on the part of the Markan author.<sup>103</sup> Such patterns present challenges to arguments that treat certain details of Mark's itinerary as mere accidents, which we confront in the Bethsaida-Gennesaret discrepancy.

### *Bethsaida*

Eventually, I shall argue that, in ESC<sup>2</sup>, when Jesus *forces* (ἠνάγκασεν; 6:45) his disciples to embark for Bethsaida, he is sending them on a mission among and to Gentiles. Moreover, I shall argue that their difficulty rowing, their failure to recognize Jesus, their not understanding about the loaves, their hardening hearts, and their arrival at Gennesaret instead of Bethsaida are all symptomatic of their resistance to participating in Gentile mission. This argument is a central facet of my overall thesis and is predicated upon two claims, namely, that Bethsaida represents Gentile space in Mark

---

<sup>103</sup> For Fowler, these patterns demonstrate that the sea crossings were “conceived and constructed by the author himself” (*Loaves and Fishes*, 68).

and the discrepancy between Bethsaida and Gennesaret, as the intended and actual destinations of ESC<sup>2</sup>, is not accidental.

### Bethsaida as Gentile Space

When considering Bethsaida's ethnic identity in Mark, one must keep in mind that the judgment that Bethsaida is Gentile is reached on the same narrative grounds as the judgment that Galilee and Judea are Jewish. Early readers of Mark brought to the text background knowledge and perspectives that the real author took into consideration, consciously or unconsciously, when constructing his narrative. Consequently, extra-textual data—historical, sociological, archaeological, literary, etc.—properly belongs within narrative criticism, especially when interpreting a text like Mark that deals with historical personages and events. While extra-textual data can be essential in making narrative judgments, narrative judgments must ultimately be grounded in the text itself. We do not have access to what the real author or readers of Mark did and did not know; we only have access to the implied author and reader as they are encoded within the narrative. Thus, it is from this perspective that we consider Mark's presentation of Bethsaida as Gentile.

To review, the claim that Bethsaida represents Gentile space in Mark rests on Mark's pattern of distinguishing spatial settings in terms of their Jewish or non-Jewish attributes and the narrative's portrayal of the two sides of the Sea of Galilee as ethnically distinct, "a dichotomy between the *Jewish* west side of the sea and the *Gentile* east side of the sea."<sup>104</sup> Bethsaida is twice mentioned in the narrative and on both occasions is clearly marked in the text as being *on the other side* (εἰς τὸ πέραν) of the sea from Jewish Galilee (6:45; 8:13, 22).<sup>105</sup> Moreover, while Mark characteristically refers to Jewish groups and institutions when narrating events in Jewish settings, no such references appear when narrating events set in Bethsaida.

---

<sup>104</sup> Svartvik, *Mark and Mission*, 238.

<sup>105</sup> Malbon, *Narrative Space*, 42. Fred Strickert offers geological evidence that, in the first-century, Bethsaida was separated from Galilee by a deep gorge cut by the Jordan river. This would have made fording nearly impossible so that travel between Bethsaida and cities like Capernaum, which were only a few miles away, would have been by boat and would have contributed to the sense that Bethsaida was on the other side of the sea (*Bethsaida: Home of the Apostles* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1998), 31–45).

The claim that Bethsaida represents Gentile space in Mark is not new, but one shared by a number of commentators.<sup>106</sup> Nevertheless, this claim runs up against two potential objections. First, Bethsaida is a Hebrew name, meaning *House of Fishing* (בֵּית צִיָּדָה) or *House of the Fisherman* (בֵּית צִיָּדָה),<sup>107</sup> making it natural for early readers to assume its Jewish character. Second, all the other canonical gospels present Bethsaida as Jewish. Neither objection is able to overturn the arguments already offered in support of a Gentile Bethsaida in Mark; nevertheless, I wish to respond to these objections by considering what recent archaeological evidence suggests about the ethnic character of first-century Bethsaida.

Bethsaida was a fishing village situated on the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, just east of where the Jordan river empties into the Sea of Galilee. Located within the administrative district of Gaulanitis, Bethsaida was under the rule of Herod Philip from the time of his father's death until his own (ca. 4 B.C.E.–33/34 C.E.). In 30, Philip upgraded Bethsaida from a village (κώμην) to a city (πόλις), by adding fortifications, attracting a larger population, and renaming it *Julia* in honor of the emperor's daughter or wife (*Ant.* 18:28).<sup>108</sup>

From 1988–1998, eleven seasons of excavations were carried out at et-Tell, which has been identified as ancient Bethsaida. Discoveries confirm that the primary occupation of its inhabitants was fishing, although there is evidence of various forms of animal husbandry.<sup>109</sup> About 8 percent of the bones recovered at the site were fish bones, including a large number of non-Kosher catfish. Rami Arav, the principal archaeologist, notes the surprise at finding that 5 percent of the bones were of pigs. Arav suggests that this may indicate a mixed population of Jews and gentiles or “perhaps more plausible, that the Jewish population was not as observant as a few schol-

---

<sup>106</sup> Boring, *Mark*, 188; Sharyn E. Dowd, *Reading Mark: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Second Gospel* (Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 2000), 69; Gibson, “Rebuke,” 36; Iverson, *Gentiles*, 40; Kelber, *Kingdom*, 57–58; Malbon, *Narrative Space*, 17, 28; idem, *Jesus*, 372. Susan Miller, *Women in Mark's Gospel* (JSNTSup 259; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 102; Schreiber, *Theologie*, 206; Smith, “Bethsaida via Gennesaret”; Svartvik, *Mark and Mission*; 301; Wefald, “Separate Gentile Mission,” 20.

<sup>107</sup> Raphael Patai, *The Children of Noah: Jewish Seafaring in Ancient Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 165.

<sup>108</sup> Mark A. Chancey, *Greco-Roman Culture and the Galilee of Jesus* (SNTSMS 134; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 92.

<sup>109</sup> Rami Arav, “New Testament Archaeology and the Case of Bethsaida,” in *Das Ende der Tage und die Gegenwart des Heils: Begegnungen mit dem Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt* (ed. Michael Becker and Wolfgang Fenske; AGJU 44; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 80, 83–84.

ars would like them to be.” This is a somewhat puzzling statement given that excavations at et-Tell have not unearthed anything that is distinctively Jewish.<sup>110</sup>

Discoveries of a building thought to be a temple of the imperial cult, a bronze incense shovel, and clay figurines have been interpreted by excavators as significant indicators of a Gentile presence in Bethsaida, although Arav adds that the evidence does not “support a conclusion of a thorough Hellenistic presence at the site.”<sup>111</sup> Chancey, however, remains unconvinced regarding the Gentile character of these finds, questioning whether the building fits that of a Roman temple and whether the shovel and figurines are really cultic objects. For Chancey, “the archaeological finds from et-Tell do not tell us whether first-century Bethsaida’s inhabitants were Jewish or gentile.”<sup>112</sup>

By itself, the archaeological evidence for the ethnic makeup of Bethsaida is inconclusive; yet when the literary evidence is brought alongside the archaeological, a reasonable impression of first-century Bethsaida emerges.

Both the literary and archaeological evidence points to the fact that Bethsaida’s culture in the first century was under strongly Hellenistic influence. . . . If there were any Jews at et-Tell, then unlike other parts of the Gaulanitis they appear to have left no signs of a way of life that distinguished them from their Gentile neighbors. . . . But whether a Jewish religious presence can be documented or not, there is little doubt about the greater marginality of Jewish culture and religion in this area. . . . [B]y crossing the Jordan [from Galilee to Gaulanitis] one was more evidently moving into a situation where Jewish culture existed among a Gentile majority, even if under Herodian rule it enjoyed a period of relative public favor.<sup>113</sup>

In short, Bethsaida appears to have had an ethnically-diverse population, one in which a Jewish minority culture existed alongside a dominant Hellenistic culture. Bethsaida might well have been regarded by some as Jewish and by others as Gentile. Thus, the other gospels’ characterization of Bethsaida as Jewish presents no obstacle to the claim that Mark characterizes it as Gentile. Furthermore, the specific ways in which Bethsaida is marked as Jewish in Matthew, Luke, and John are absent in Mark, which serves to strengthen the claim for its Gentile characterization in Mark.

---

<sup>110</sup> Markus Bockmuehl, “Simon Peter and Bethsaida,” in *The Missions of James, Peter, and Paul: Tensions in Early Christianity* (ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans; NovTSup 115; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 74.

<sup>111</sup> Arav, “Bethsaida,” 87.

<sup>112</sup> Mark A. Chancey, *The Myth of a Gentile Galilee* (SNTSMS 118; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 108.

<sup>113</sup> Bockmuehl, “Simon Peter and Bethsaida,” 81–82.

In Matthew and Luke, the indication that Bethsaida is Jewish comes from the double-tradition material, specifically, the woes Jesus pronounces upon cities that had failed to respond appropriately to his call to repentance (Matt 11:20–24 // Luke 10:12–15). In these prophetic condemnations, Bethsaida is linked with Chorazin and Capernaum vis-à-vis Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom, a clear contrast between Jewish and Gentile cities. Yet, in Mark, Bethsaida is never associated with any Jewish city nor contrasted with any Gentile city. Instead, there are implicit contrasts between Bethsaida and Jewish space, in its identification as being on the other side of the sea opposite Jewish Galilee (6:45; 8:13, 22) and in the contrast between Bethsaida and Gennesaret as the intended and actual destinations of ESC<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, the closest association of Bethsaida to another place is with the Gentile villages of Caesarea Philippi, where Jesus and his disciples go after leaving Bethsaida (8:27).

In John, Bethsaida's Jewish character is established through its being identified as being *of Galilee* (12:21) and as the hometown of three of Jesus' Jewish disciples: Philip, Andrew, and Peter (1:44). In Mark, Bethsaida is beyond the borders of Galilee, and Peter and Andrew reside in Capernaum (1:29).<sup>114</sup>

In Matthew, Luke, and John, the Jewish identity of Bethsaida is marked in the narrative by means other than its Jewish name. In Matthew and Luke, its Jewish character is established through its association with other Jewish cities vis-à-vis Gentile cities, and in John, through its association with Galilee and Jesus' Jewish disciples. In Mark, these characterizations of Bethsaida are entirely absent, and in many instances the opposite obtains. Ironically, then, the Jewish characterization of Bethsaida in the other gospels, far from challenging the claim of its Gentile characterization in Mark, actually serves to highlight and corroborate it.

### The Bethsaida-Gennesaret Discrepancy

Scholars have long noted the discrepancy between Bethsaida and Gennesaret in ESC<sup>2</sup> and have attempted to explain it. Smith reviews these under four categories: natural or rational solutions, theories of dislocation, textual solutions, and narrative solutions.<sup>115</sup> Only a few of the explanations need concern us here for the primary goal

---

<sup>114</sup> As do Matt 8:5, 14 and Luke 4:31, 38.

<sup>115</sup> Smith, "Bethsaida via Gennesaret," 349–74.

is to demonstrate that the discrepancy between Bethsaida and Gennesaret is not accidental but, in fact, intended by the author.

According to Smith, the most common solution is the claim that the boat was blown off course by the contrary wind (6:48).<sup>116</sup> This explanation is plausible but by itself is inadequate for, when Jesus ascends into the boat the wind immediately *abates* (ἐκόπασεν, 6:51), yet they do not reach Bethsaida. In other words, this theory does not explain *why* they abandon their intended destination when they were able to continue on. After all, in ESC<sup>1</sup>, after the wind and the sea *abated* (ἐκόπασεν, 4:39), they continued on to their intended destination, εἰς τὸ πέραν (4:35; 5:1). Achtemeier concurs, “the basic problem remains in all such explanations, namely that Jesus, who has just proved himself master of the sea, is nevertheless unable to bring the boat to its intended landing.”<sup>117</sup> Later, I shall argue that their failure to reach their intended destination after the wind calms down suggests that the real obstacle to their successfully crossing over to Gentile Bethsaida was not the contrary wind but the disciples themselves. Nevertheless, while the blown-off-course theory fails, it does rightfully attribute the discrepancy between intended and actual destinations to the purposeful intentions of the author.

Smith also discusses a number of dislocation theories that regard the Bethsaida-Gennesaret discrepancy as an (inadvertent) consequence of the author’s redaction of traditional sources. Perhaps the most influential and sophisticated dislocation theory is that of Achtemeier, who argues that the discrepancy is a byproduct of Mark’s rearrangement of two miracle catenae.<sup>118</sup> Achtemeier maintains that, in Mark’s sources, the feeding of the five thousand concluded with Jesus and his disciples’ departing by boat and arriving at Gennesaret (6:34–44, 53), which finds a parallel in their departing by boat and arriving at Dalmanutha following the feeding of the four thousand (8:1–10). At the same time, Jesus’ walking upon the sea (6:45–51), which begins with his sending the disciples off to Bethsaida, was followed by Jesus’ healing of the blind man at Bethsaida (8:22–26). Mark rearranged these catenae, inserting Jesus’ walking upon the sea into the feeding of the five thousand just prior to their arrival at Gennesaret. Mark’s desire was “to connect both stories to the disci-

---

<sup>116</sup> Smith, “Bethsaida via Gennesaret,” 351–52.

<sup>117</sup> Achtemeier, “Toward,” 281–82.

<sup>118</sup> Smith, “Bethsaida via Gennesaret,” 352–58.



ples' lack of understanding," which explains the "geographical problem." Achtemeier's theory has much to commend it, yet it features two fundamental flaws.

First, Achtemeier's proposal, like most theories of dislocation, is grounded in the uncritical assumption that the discrepancy between the intended and actual destinations of ESC<sup>2</sup> is *a problem in the narrative needing a solution*. To his credit, Achtemeier thinks it "grotesque to assume that any author, however uninterested he may be in geographic detail, would create such a difficulty."<sup>119</sup> Yet, because he sees the discrepancy as problematic, he concludes that Mark could not be responsible for either designation; Mark must have found both Bethsaida and Gennesaret in his sources. Equally unlikely, for Achtemeier, is the fact that this mix-up could have remained for very long in the tradition in such a form, leading him to conclude that the sequence of the feeding of the five thousand followed by Jesus' walking upon the sea is redactional. In short, two of Achtemeier's key arguments explaining the origin of the Bethsaida-Gennesaret discrepancy rest upon the presumption that the discrepancy poses a problem for the reader.

This leads to a second problem, namely, Achtemeier's proposal never explains why Mark retained this geographical discrepancy. Again, to his credit, Achtemeier argues that the discrepancy would not have gone unnoticed by Mark, thereby granting a level of awareness and sophistication that many theories of dislocation deny the author. As Smith observes:

Dislocation theories are by nature speculative, and tend to make the Evangelist look more like a ham-fisted scissors-and-paste compiler than a competent redactor. But redaction and rhetorical criticism have shown him to be a literary editor of some standing, well-capable of arranging his sources to suit his purposes. It seems more reasonable to assert that Mark knew well enough what he was doing when he created his geographical inconsistencies—or allowed them to stand in the traditions he received.<sup>120</sup>

According to Achtemeier, Mark was not only aware of this geographical discrepancy, he tolerated it out of a desire to link Jesus' feeding and walking upon the sea with the disciples' lack of understanding.<sup>121</sup> Yet, he offers no rationale for why Mark need tolerate such a problem, again assuming it to be a problem. Moreover, his logic is flawed. If, as Achtemeier claims, no author would have created such a difficulty and

---

<sup>119</sup> Achtemeier, "Toward," 283–84.

<sup>120</sup> Smith, "Bethsaida via Gennesaret," 358.

<sup>121</sup> Achtemeier, "Toward," 284.

such a difficulty would not have remained in the tradition, how can he maintain that Mark was willing to tolerate it? Why would Mark need to tolerate a geographical difficulty when it could have easily been eliminated through the removal of one or both of the place names, especially as they contribute nothing to Mark's redactional aims, at least as Achtemeier understands them? These questions do not necessarily invalidate Achtemeier's theory that the Bethsaida-Gennesaret discrepancy originated with Mark's rearrangement of sources; however, they present a challenge to his assertions that Mark recognized the discrepancy, knew it to be a problem, and chose to live with it. While I remain agnostic regarding the existence of Achtemeier's alleged miracle catenae and their subsequent rearrangement in Mark, such a theory requires an author who was a master of his sources, making it more likely that the Markan author intended the geographical discrepancy than simply tolerated it. In fact, might not this discrepancy between Gentile and Jewish destinations belong to (vs. being a mere byproduct of) Mark's desire to associate the feeding and the walking upon the sea with the disciples' incomprehension?

What, then, is the positive evidence not only that the author would have been aware of the Bethsaida-Gennesaret discrepancy but that the author designed it? First, the close proximity of Bethsaida (6:45) and Gennesaret (6:53), with only seven verses and one episode separating them, makes it highly probable that the author knew of the discrepancy and that readers would have noticed it. More significantly, both Bethsaida and Gennesaret stand out in their respective contexts with the result that the contrast between intended and actual destinations is more pronounced. Bethsaida receives attention because of the unusual nature of the disciples' embarking; this is the only time Jesus *forces* (ἡνάγκασεν, 6:45) his disciples to do anything, and the only time the disciples travel in the boat without Jesus. Bethsaida is also the only place name ever specified in a departure statement. Four sea crossings have departure statements, and all four include the intended destination; yet, only ESC<sup>22</sup>'s departure statement identifies the destination with a specific, geopolitical designation.<sup>122</sup>

---

<sup>122</sup> Cf. George W. Young, *Subversive Symmetry: Exploring the Fantastic in Mark 6:45–56* (BibIntSer 41; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 117.

In addition, Bethsaida occurs in the second step of a two-step progression (εἰς τὸ πέραν/πρὸς Βηθσαϊδάν), the only two-step progression in a departure statement.<sup>123</sup> Gennesaret also occurs in the second step of a two-step progression (διαπεράσαντες ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν/ἦλθον εἰς Γεννησαρὲτ), one of only two such progressions in the five arrival statements (Figure 5–12).<sup>124</sup>

	First Step — General	Second Step — More Precise
<b>6:45</b>	εἰς τὸ πέραν	πρὸς Βηθσαϊδάν
<b>6:53</b>	διαπεράσαντες ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν	ἦλθον εἰς Γεννησαρὲτ

**Figure 5–12: The Two-Step Progressions of ESC<sup>2</sup>**

Thus, out of nine departure and arrival statements, only three have two-step progressions (5:1; 6:45, 53), and two of the three belong to ESC<sup>2</sup>, making it the only crossing that exhibits a two-step progression in both its departure and arrival statements. This seems more than coincidental, especially given that ESC<sup>2</sup> is the only sea crossing that arrives at a destination other than the one intended. Moreover, two-step progressions are generally regarded as characteristically Markan. All of this strongly suggests that the Bethsaida-Gennesaret discrepancy was a rhetorical strategy designed by the author for the benefit of the reader.

Fowler discusses this same set of two-step progressions, though he operates with different assumptions and so draws different conclusions.

If the author had exercised just a little more care, no problem with the geography of 6:45 and 6:53 would ever have been noticed. . . . The first phrase in either verse is sufficiently vague to cause no problems. It is only when Mark tries to add concrete detail, such as place names, that he gets into difficulty. If he had used εἰς τὸ πέραν, ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν, and the name of only *one* of the towns, all would have been well. Instead, he used both names, which confuses the reader who happens to know and care where Bethsaida and Gennesaret were located in the first century C.E.<sup>125</sup>

Unlike Achtemeier, Fowler regards Bethsaida and Gennesaret to be redactional, yet this undermines his argument. How can Fowler presume that readers know and care where Bethsaida and Gennesaret were located, and at the same time imply that the

<sup>123</sup> Frans Neirynck, *Duality in Mark: Contributions to the Study of the Markan Redaction* (BETL 31; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1972), 95.

<sup>124</sup> Neirynck does not identify this as a two-step progression; Fowler does (*Loaves and Fishes*, 66).

<sup>125</sup> Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes*, 66.

author does not? Why does he assume that readers would have been confused by this discrepancy? It would make as much, if not more, sense that readers who know where these places are would conclude that the boat did not reach its intended destination.<sup>126</sup> Fowler claims that, had Mark exercised more care, no geographical problems would have been introduced. Yet, Fowler's principal thesis that Mark created the feeding of the five thousand, based it on the traditional feeding of the four thousand, and then placed it first in the narrative so that the disciples would appear to the reader as exceedingly obtuse, implies an author who exercises great care. Fowler never entertains the possibility that the Bethsaida-Gennesaret discrepancy is intentional, which is surprising, especially given that he, as a Markan reader-response critic, is well aware of "the ways in which the author of the gospel has undertaken to direct and control the reader's experience of reading the gospel."<sup>127</sup> One can only conclude that his failure to consider this possibility is because he, like many others, operates with the uncritical assumption that the discrepancy between Bethsaida and Gennesaret is a geographical *problem*.

As we shall see, the disciples' failure to reach Gentile Bethsaida introduces a new chapter in their characterization in Mark. They move from those who lack faith and do not understand in a weak sense to those who are purposefully resistant and do not understand in a strong sense, which is why they are described as having hardened hearts (6:52) immediately prior to their arrival at the non-intended, Jewish Gennesaret (6:53). Therefore, the Bethsaida-Gennesaret discrepancy is part of Mark's rhetorical strategy for the negative characterization of the disciples, a thesis that would complement and corroborate Fowler's.

---

<sup>126</sup> In fact, the manuscript evidence shows little evidence that the geographical discrepancy was regarded as geographically problematic. All attested readings witness to Gennesaret, and all but two quite late minuscules (983 1689) witness to Bethsaida. In a few manuscripts (W 1 118 1582), εἰς τὸ πέραν is unattested in 6:45, yet its absence does not remove the discrepancy between Bethsaida and Gennesaret. The almost universal textual support for Bethsaida and Gennesaret, which stands in marked contrast to the textual variants for Gerasa (5:1) and Dalmanutha (8:10), contradicts Fowler's claim that readers would have found this itinerary confusing. On the other hand, the absence of Bethsaida in the Matthean parallel is sometimes taken as evidence that Matthew found Mark's geography problematic. As I hope to argue later, Matthew's modification of Mark 6:45 (Matt 14:22), where Jesus sends the disciples on a Gentile mission, and his modification of the itinerary in Mark 7:31 (Matt 15:29), where Jesus goes on a Gentile mission, is occasioned by Matthew's view that during his lifetime Jesus did not engage in (15:24), nor did he send his disciples on (10:5–6), a mission to Gentiles. In other words, Matthew's elimination of Bethsaida is not due to its being geographically problematic but to its being thematically problematic.

<sup>127</sup> Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes*, 149.

### The ESCs as Intended JGSCs

One final observation concerns the itineraries of the ESCs. As we have seen, out of the six sea crossings, three are ESCs and three are USCs. Moreover, as it stands in the narrative, two of the ESCs are JGSCs while one is a JJSC and two of the USCs are GJSCs while one is a JJSC (Figure 5–13). If, however, we consider the fact that SC<sup>4</sup>/ESC<sup>2</sup> was originally intended as a JGSC, then a potentially significant detail of the narrative becomes discernible, namely, that *all three ESCs and only the three ESCs are actual or intended Jewish-to-Gentile sea crossings* (Figure 5–13). In other words, the episodic sea crossings are *exclusively* full sea crossings that originate in Jewish territories and are destined for Gentile territories.<sup>128</sup>

	Actual Itineraries					Intended Itineraries			
	JG	GJ	JJ	GG		JG	GJ	JJ	GG
ESCs	1, 6		4		ESCs	1, 4, 6			
USCs		2, 5	3		USCs		2, 5	3	

**Figure 5–13: The Actual vs. the Intended Itineraries of the Markan Sea Crossings**

That the ESCs are exclusively destined for Gentile spaces is unlikely to be accidental given that there are two types of sea crossings (ESC, USC) and four possible itineraries (JG, GJ, JJ, GG) and raises an important questions. Do the Gentile trajectories of the ESCs contribute to the events that take place during the sea crossing, or at least to how the reader perceives those events. If so, in what ways? After all, spatial setting “is not merely an elaboration which could be easily discarded without any fear of doing violence to the work, but is often indispensable to character or plot.”<sup>129</sup> For example, it matters for Mark that Jesus’ first exorcism of an unclean spirit takes place within a synagogue (sacred space). Situating the same exorcism in a house (common space) might have little, if any, discernible effect on what characters say and do (the story), but it would certainly affect the reader’s perception of the significance and meaning of those events in Mark (the discourse). Moreover, spatial setting is not necessarily static. For example, in Luke’s travel narrative (9:51–19:10), all of the episodes take place while Jesus is en route to Jerusalem. Their spatial orientation

<sup>128</sup> Schreiber offers a slightly different but important observation, namely, that, of the four SCs to employ εἰς τὸ πέραν, the catastrophic failure of the disciples occurs on the three *east journeys* (Ostreisen) and not on the one *west journey* (Westreise) (*Theologie*, 206).

<sup>129</sup> Smith, *Lion*, 151–52.

influences the reader's perception of these events since the reader knows that Jesus' fateful destiny awaits him in Jerusalem. Likewise, given the Markan narrative's demonstrable interest in Gentiles and Gentile issues, the Gentile trajectory of the ESCs should be taken into account when exegeting them both individually and as a whole.

#### PRINCIPAL CARRIERS OF THE SEA CROSSING MOTIF

##### MARK 1:16–20, FISHERS OF PEOPLE

	16	17	18	19	20
παράγω	x				
θάλασσα	xx				
Γαλιλαία	x				
ἀμφιβάλλω	x				
ἀλιεύς	x	x			
δίκτυον			x	x	
καταρτίζω				x	
πλοῖον					xx
μισθωτός					x

**Figure 5–14: Members of the Sea Crossing Motif in Mark 1:16–20**

The Sea Crossing motif debuts in the call narratives of Jesus' first disciples (1:16–20) upon Jesus' return to Galilee following his baptism and wilderness test. In this episode, Jesus is passing along beside the Sea of Galilee (1:16) where he encounters four fishers engaged in their trade. Jesus immediately calls them to come after him with the promise that he will make them into *fishers of people* (1:17). These call narratives, coming as they do on the heels of the programmatic summary of Jesus' kingdom message and mission (1:14–15), serve as the “incipient act of that mission.” That is, “Jesus' recruitment of the fishers constitutes an inaugural—and thus momentous—step in his enactment of God's dominion.”<sup>130</sup> Understanding the contours of that call contributes to our understanding of the content and function of the Sea Crossing motif in Mark.

According to Vernon K. Robbins, Jesus' practice of calling disciples in Mark conforms precisely to neither Jewish nor Greco-Roman conventions governing teacher/disciple relations but represents instead a distinctive adaptation and intersec-

<sup>130</sup> Henderson, *Christology and Discipleship*, 49, 50.

tion of biblical and Greco-Roman traditions.<sup>131</sup> On the one hand, Jesus' pattern of seeking and summoning disciples stands in marked contrast to the patterns present in rabbinic literature where rabbis never seek but rather are sought by would-be disciples.

While in the Gospel of Mark and rabbinic literature both contain scenes in which disciples are following after a teacher, the rhetorical form of the stories which initiate the teacher/disciple relation are different. Underlying the difference in rhetorical form is a difference in social pattern. Mark presupposes an itinerant tradition, while rabbinic literature presupposes a school tradition. Social pattern and rhetorical form unite in different ways in the two types of literature, creating the summoning and promise form in Mark in contrast to the request form in rabbinic literature.<sup>132</sup>

On the other hand, summons and response is a conventional form within Greco-Roman literature and culture, associated especially with the sophists who traveled from city to city to gather disciples.<sup>133</sup> In Mark, the intermingling of Jewish and Greco-Roman social and rhetorical conventions is reflected in the call narratives of 1:16–20, which initiate teacher/disciple relationships via a summons and response pattern (Greco-Roman) while at the same time being formally modeled after the Elijah-Elisha call narrative in 1 Kings, which initiates a prophet/successor relationship (Jewish).<sup>134</sup>

That Jesus' practice of calling disciples in Mark—not only of Simon and Andrew (1:16–18) and James and John (1:19–20) but also of Levi (2:14)—is modeled upon Elijah's calling of Elisha (1 Kgs 19:19–21) is demonstrated by the fact that these episodes share the same basic elements, including significant verbal parallels.<sup>135</sup> In each episode, (1) a prophetic leader takes the *initiative* to seek out and secure followers, (2) who are encountered while engaged in their primary *occupation*, (3) at which point the leader *summons* them to come after him, (4) prompting a two-fold *response* whereby the summoned immediately abandon their livelihoods and follow

---

<sup>131</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 82–108; here 101, 107.

<sup>132</sup> Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher*, 105.

<sup>133</sup> Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher*, 88.

<sup>134</sup> Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher*, 87.

<sup>135</sup> A visual representation of the first two Markan call narratives in English, which highlights their structural and verbal similarities, can be found in, Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002). Shiner offers a Greek synopsis of all three Markan call narratives, identifying seven common features (*Follow Me!*, 172–73), and Marcus offers an English synopsis of the Elijah's calling of Elisha and Jesus' calling of Simon and Andrew (*Mark*, 183).

the one who has summoned them. Thus, the climax of these call narratives is the abandonment of one's occupation and livelihood and the adoption of a new vocation. In 1 Kings, Elisha exchanges an agricultural occupation for a prophetic vocation. In Mark, the first four disciples exchange one form of fishing for another; they forsake fishing for fish and take up fishing for *people*. But, what does it mean to fish for people?

### *Fishing for People*

First, a variety of OT texts have been suggested as possible background for understanding Mark's expression, ἁλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων (e.g., Jer 16:16; Ezek 19:4–5; 29:4–5; 38:4; Amos 4:2; Hab 1:14–17). Yet, in all of these texts, the metaphorical deployment of fishing language and imagery (e.g., fish, fishers, nets, and hooks) occurs in contexts of judgment,<sup>136</sup> which does not correspond to the Markan context with its stress on salvation. Even Jeremiah 16:16, which offers the closest parallel to Mark, occurs in a context in which YHWH announces judgment for Judah's idolatry.<sup>137</sup> Here, YHWH promises to send for fishers and hunters (from other nations) to gather the people into exile.<sup>138</sup> This is not to say that the context in which Mark 1:16–20 occurs is entirely devoid of judgment for Jesus' announcement of the God's impending reign is accompanied by a call to repentance. Nevertheless, the tenor of 1:14–15 is overwhelmingly salvific given that the nearness of God's kingdom and the necessity of repentance is characterized as good news. Thus, in marked contrast to the OT contexts that purportedly stand behind the use of ἁλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων in Mark, the accent in the Markan context is upon "rescu[ing] people *from* rather than catch[ing] them *for* judgment."<sup>139</sup>

---

<sup>136</sup> "The passages in which the image is developed are distinctively ominous in tone, stressing the divine judgment" (Lane, *Mark*, 67).

<sup>137</sup> John Arthur Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 410; Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 345–46.

<sup>138</sup> *Contra* Marcus who claims that "part of the fishers' task seems to be the eschatological regathering of the people of Israel in the new exodus" (*Mark*, 184). Presumably, Marcus is associating 16:16 with the intercalated promise of future restoration in 16:14–15, understanding the fishers and hunters as YHWH's agents of restoration. Yet, grammatically 16:16 must go with 16:17–18, which is required by the causal clause that begins 16:17. Thus, Jeremiah 16:16 returns to the subject of impending judgment for Judah's idolatry, where the "total impression is of a judgment that would be both severe and complete" (Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 410).

<sup>139</sup> France, *Mark*, 97. So also, Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 74; Gundry, *Mark*, 72.



In 1967, Wilhelm H. Wuellner published a detailed study of *fishers of men* and other related metaphors and images (e.g., hunting and fowling) in both ancient literature and iconography.<sup>140</sup> His study begins by challenging “the idyllic tradition of ‘the happy, simple fisherfolk’”<sup>141</sup> by considering actual fishing practices in biblical antiquity, both within and outwith Palestine. He concludes that, “Historical-critical studies of the economic and social roles that fishing played in Galilean society yield a different and . . . more exciting picture.”<sup>142</sup> Wuellner’s study also reveals that the use of fishing metaphors is fairly widespread, occurring in Ancient Near Eastern, Jewish, Christian, Rabbinic, and Greco-Roman traditions. This demonstrates the multivalent nature of fishing metaphors,<sup>143</sup> as they can occur in cultic, prophetic, didactic, social, and cultural contexts and can carry both positive and negative connotations. By itself, then, “fishing for human beings is an ambiguous figure of speech.”<sup>144</sup> Thus,

In spite of some scholars’ efforts to define more precisely the background and meaning of the ‘fishers of persons’ metaphor, the meaning of the promise can only be deduced from the context. The uses of the metaphor are too varied to assume that any one biblical or non-biblical example lies behind the Markan usage.<sup>145</sup>

So, while Mark’s use of ἁλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων fits broadly within the range of connotations established through its prior use in both biblical and non-biblical contexts, the semantic frames ἁλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων has the potential to evoke are too numerous and diverse for any one of them to be determinative for our understanding of its use in Mark without giving primary consideration to the narrative itself. The approach advocated here is that the starting point for understanding ἁλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων in Mark is that those whom Jesus calls are in fact fishers by trade.

It is not accidental that the only two occurrences of ἁλιεύς in Mark occur one right after the other. Moreover, that the first occurrence is literal (1:16) and the second metaphorical (1:17) suggests that a pun is intended. Lane, however, demurs, “To interpret this phrase only as a play on words appropriate to the situation is to fail to appreciate its biblical background and its relevance to the context.”<sup>146</sup> Yet, as has

---

<sup>140</sup> Wuellner, “*Fishers of Men*”; see also idem, “Early Christian Traditions about the Fishers of Men,” *HQ* 54 (1965): 50–60.

<sup>141</sup> Wuellner, “*Fishers of Men*”, 7.

<sup>142</sup> Wuellner, “*Fishers of Men*”, 7.

<sup>143</sup> “The imagery and connotations are multilayered” (Boring, *Mark*, 59).

<sup>144</sup> Gundry, *Mark*, 72.

<sup>145</sup> Shiner, *Follow Me!*, 175.

<sup>146</sup> Lane, *Mark*, 67.

already been argued, the OT texts in view match neither the subject matter nor the tenor of the Markan narrative at this point. Ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων may not *only* be a play on words, but it is at least that. Lane too readily dismisses “the importance of the fact that for Mark the men who are called to become ‘fishers of men’ are already fishers. It is difficult to see how this very obvious reference of the new vocation to the old can be anything but determinative for interpretation.”<sup>147</sup> Support for this comes from the avoidability of the first occurrence ἀλιεῖς. In 1:16, Simon and Andrew are depicted as casting a fishing net into the sea, following which the narrator intrudes with ἦσαν γὰρ ἀλιεῖς, which “should be unnecessary for anyone who knows the meaning of ἀμφιβάλλω.”<sup>148</sup> This explanatory γὰρ-clause is the second step of a two-step progression and prepares “the way for the declaration of their new role as ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων.”<sup>149</sup> Simon and Andrew’s occupation as fishers is made explicit because it provides the starting point for how readers are to understand their new vocation as fishers of people.

Once the expression “fishers of men” has been related to the previous vocation of the newly chosen disciples, it still remains to determine the particular meaning attached to these words by the Marcan narrative. The presumption is that the programmatic nature of the words of Jesus is made clear in the developing narrative.<sup>150</sup>

To begin, the simplest and most basic meaning of ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων in Mark is rooted in the activity Simon and Andrew are engaged in when Jesus summons them, namely, casting their net into the sea, for it is this and this activity alone that identifies them as fishers. Since fishers cast nets in order to catch fish, it stands to reason that the basic connotation of ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων in Mark is that of people catching people. This observation may seem trivial, but fishers engage in a variety of activities and any one of them could have been used to identify Simon and Andrew’s occupation, which in turn would affect the basic connotation of ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων. For example, had they been sorting fish when they were called by Jesus then ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων would possess a different image and focus, the sorting of people, much as one finds in Matthew’s parable of the dragnet (13:47–50). As it is, the basic meaning of ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων relates to catching people with no indication at this point whether this is to be understood positively or negatively, though I have already given reasons

---

<sup>147</sup> Meye, *Jesus and the Twelve*, 102.

<sup>148</sup> France, *Mark*, 95–96.

<sup>149</sup> France, *Mark*, 96; so also, Guelich, *Mark*, 50.

<sup>150</sup> Meye, *Jesus and the Twelve*, 102.

to expect the former. That James and John are summoned while mending their nets, in preparation for catching fish, supports this understanding of ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων. But what exactly does catching people look like for Mark? What is entailed in becoming a catcher of people?

Mark 1:17 provides the initial clues.<sup>151</sup> First, becoming ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων entails coming after Jesus, which could mean being with Jesus or doing the things Jesus does or both and which involves leaving behind one's former way of life (1:18, 20).<sup>152</sup> Second, becoming ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων is something that Jesus will bring about (ποιήσω ὑμᾶς). According to Robbins, this promise "introduces logical progressive form into the narrative. The reader now expects Jesus to engage in the interaction necessary to equip these disciple-companions with the ability to 'fish men.'"<sup>153</sup> But *where* in the narrative, asks Meye, does "this appointment [to become ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων] receive its clarification;" *where* is the meaning of ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων made more explicit?<sup>154</sup> Most Markan scholars would readily look to the appointment and commission/mission narratives of the Twelve (3:13–19; 6:7–13) as the places where these answers can be found. Few, if any, would think to include 6:45–52, but as we shall see, ESC<sup>2</sup> is also a mission narrative, one that is quite important for understanding what it means to be and become ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων in Mark.

### Mark 3:13–19

The appointment of the Twelve in Mark 3:13–19 is the logical progression of Jesus' promise in 1:16–20, as indicated by the verbal and thematic features shared by these two episodes. In both episodes, Jesus calls named individuals as apprentices; the four who were called in 1:16–20 head the list of the twelve in 3:13–19. Jesus' promise to *make* them into fishers of people (ποιήσω, 1:17) finds initial fulfillment in his *making*, that is, his appointment of, the Twelve (ἐποίησεν, 3:14, [16]). What we have then in 3:13–19 are details that begin to make explicit what is implied in 1:17. Jesus appoints the Twelve (1) to be with him and (2) to be sent out by him to preach and cast out demons, which is what it means to be and become ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων.

---

<sup>151</sup> The following discussion is indebted to Meye's treatment of Mark 1:17 (*Jesus and the Twelve*, 102–6).

<sup>152</sup> Cf. 10:27 where Peter declares, "Look, we have left everything and followed you."

<sup>153</sup> Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher*, 85.

<sup>154</sup> Meye, *Jesus and the Twelve*, 105.

### Mark 6:7–13

The logical progression continues with the commissioning and mission of the Twelve in Mark 6:7–13, a scene with clear narrative links with 3:13–19 and 1:16–20. In 6:7, Jesus *calls* (προσκαλείται; cf. προσκαλείται, 3:13; ἐκάλεσεν, 1:20) the *Twelve* (cf. 3:14, [16]) and *sends them out* (ἀποστέλλειν; cf. ἀποστέλλη, 3:14). In 6:12–13, they are portrayed as *preaching* (ἐκήρυξαν, cf. κηρύσσειν, 3:14) and *casting out many demons* (δαιμόνια πολλὰ ἐξέβαλλον, cf. ἐκβάλλειν τὰ δαιμόνια, 3:15). In 3:14, they were appointed to have authority over demons, and now they are granted that authority along with the opportunity to exercise it; the “future goal described in 3:13–19 is . . . brought to realization in 6:7–13, 30.”<sup>155</sup> Thus, both scenes communicate the substance of what it means to be fishers of people, through what they share in common and through elements in 6:7–13 that go beyond what was specified in the original appointment of the Twelve. For example, the content of the Twelve’s preaching is now identified. They preach *repentance* (μετανοῶσιν, 6:12), which likely is Markan shorthand for proclaiming the good news of the kingdom since the only other occurrence of μετανοέω is found in 1:14–15. In addition to exorcising demons, the Twelve anoint and *heal* the sick (ἐθεράπευον, 6:13). Here again, the activity engaged in by the Twelve matches that of Jesus who is known for healing the sick (1:34; 3:2, 10). In fact, the Twelve’s ability to heal *many sick people* (πολλοὺς ἀρρώστους, 6:13) contrasts with Jesus’ ability to heal only a *few sick people* at the conclusion of preceding episode (ὀλίγοις ἀρρώστοις, 6:5).

### Mark 6:45–52

Reflecting upon the apostolic mission of 6:7–13, Meye wonders about its abrupt ending: “What is the meaning in Mark of the fact that Jesus calls men to follow him as fishers of men, and then authorizes them to be sent out on but a single mission?”<sup>156</sup> Meye answers his own question first by noting that the disciples do actually engage in further missionary activities, such as their participation in the two feedings. On the other hand, he notes that, throughout the central section of the gospel (our Movements 2 and 3), the disciples are increasingly uncomprehending and show signs of not being able to fulfill their apostolic mandates, as in their inability to exorcise an

---

<sup>155</sup> Meye, *Jesus and the Twelve*, 108.

<sup>156</sup> Meye, *Jesus and the Twelve*, 110.

unclean spirit in 9:14–27. These failures demonstrate that the disciples are not yet ready for their apostolic vocation and occasion further instruction in what it means to be fishers of people, which they will not become until after Jesus' death and resurrection.

Basically, *the one mission of the Twelve is a point of beginning for Jesus' instruction in the full meaning of their mission*. The mission of the Twelve during Jesus' ministry is unique; the time of the Incarnation is rather the time of being with Jesus and being instructed by him. The time of *their mission* is after Easter.<sup>157</sup>

Meye poses a very insightful question, but there is a simpler, more straightforward solution than the one he proposes, namely, that Jesus does send his disciples on more than one apostolic mission. In fact, immediately after what was to have been a time of rest and refreshment following their successful Galilean mission (6:31–32), Jesus sends his disciples on an apostolic mission into Gentile territory. This, I take, is the meaning of Jesus' having his disciples embark for Bethsaida without him following the feeding of the five thousand (6:45). This is a reading that few scholars have suggested and even fewer have developed, but one that finds much to commend it within the Markan narrative.

The main line of evidence concerns the expectations of the implied reader, which have been engendered by the narrative and are then evoked in 6:45. For example, the only other time the twelve are separated from Jesus (except when they abandon him at his arrest) is when they are sent out on their Galilean mission, which in story time occurs just prior to the feeding of the five thousand.<sup>158</sup>

Since Jesus first called the four fishers in Mk. 1:16–20, they have consistently accompanied him in his work. True, Mark's Jesus does function occasionally without his entire entourage in the first half of the gospel . . . ; yet in Mk. 6:45 we find only the second instance of Jesus' intentional dismissal of the group from his presence. Moreover, since in the first instance (Mk. 6:7–13) Jesus deliberately sends his disciples out as his emissaries, the Markan narrative pattern opens the way for a similar intent at this juncture.<sup>159</sup>

---

<sup>157</sup> Meye, *Jesus and the Twelve*, 112–13 (italics original).

<sup>158</sup> *Story time* denotes the temporal sequence of events in their chronological sequence, the order in which they actually occur within the story world. *Narrative time* (or plotted time) denotes the temporal sequence of events as they occur in the narrative. In story time, the first apostolic mission (6:7–13, 30) is followed by the feeding of the five thousand (6:31–44), whereas in narrative time it is followed by the intercalated episode about Herod and John the Baptist (6:14–29). For a discussion of story vs. plotted time see, Petersen, *Literary Criticism*, 49–80.

<sup>159</sup> Henderson, *Christology and Discipleship*, 213–14.

Read in isolation from the rest of the Markan narrative, little in 6:45–52 would suggest that an intention for mission stands behind Jesus' forcing his disciples to cross over to Bethsaida. This interpretation is only possible by reading 6:45–52 in light of the expectations encoded in the narrative. In particular, Jesus' promise to his first disciples that he will make them fishers of people (1:17), reinforced by his appointment of twelve apostles to be with him and to be sent out by him (3:13–14) generates the expectation that the disciples' role in the narrative will be characterized by their being with and being sent out by Jesus. Such is the expectation of the implied reader that, when an actual reader perceives that the disciples have engaged in only one apostolic mission, questions are immediately raised. Meze's question arises precisely because certain expectations created and sustained throughout the early portions of Mark appear never to reach fulfillment.

Most scholars find no hint, let alone fulfillment of the expectation for an apostolic mission beyond 6:7–13, and certainly not in 6:45–52. No doubt, the lack of apostolic terminology (e.g., ἀποστέλλω) and missionary instructions in 6:45–52 are factors contributing to the widespread failure to see in 6:45 the commencement of a second apostolic mission. Moreover, the disciples are not ever portrayed as engaging in another apostolic mission.<sup>160</sup> This is easily explained by the fact that the disciples do not actually reach their appointed destination of Bethsaida, and so there is no mission to narrate. Presupposing the missionary nature of 6:45, which has already been established on other grounds, the lack of missionary instructions would simply indicate to the implied reader that the disciples were expected to conduct this mission according to the same guidelines that governed their first tour (6:7b–11); the close proximity of the two missions makes this reading viable. In fact, only one episode, the feeding of the five thousand, separates the completion of the first missionary tour (6:30) from the beginning of the second (6:45). After the disciples' successful Galilean mission, so many people are coming and going that Jesus proposes that they all retire to a deserted place to rest *for awhile* (ὀλίγον, 6:31), which suggests that they are getting away in order to recuperate and prepare for the next apostolic tour of duty. Granted, on this occasion, Jesus is not described as *sending* them *out* (ἀποστέλλω), but I would suggest that ἀποστέλλω has been replaced by the stronger,

---

<sup>160</sup> At least not within the confines of the Markan narrative. Mark 13:10 points to a post-narrative apostolic mission to all the nations, which will take place between Jesus' resurrection and return.

more negative ἀναγκάζω in order to convey the disciples' resistance to being sent out on a Gentile mission. This receives further development below.

In the end, ESC<sup>2</sup> is not simply a *failed* sea crossing but a *failed* apostolic mission.

[T]he east side of the lake is, of course, outside the Galilean homeland of Jesus and his disciples. Jesus, in asking his disciples to go before him to Bethsaida (6:45), is asking them to move out to others, to move beyond their own religious tradition. As commanded, the disciples set out in the boat, but they are “distressed in rowing” . . . , fearful at Jesus' appearance . . . , and . . . not understanding “about the loaves” for “their hearts were hardened” (6:52). Are the disciples, according to Mark, also distressed, fearful, and not understanding about going to Bethsaida?<sup>161</sup>

If real readers were attentive to the expectations engendered by the narrative's discourse for the implied reader, then the fact that Jesus sends the disciples on a second apostolic mission would be more readily apparent, *and* the disciples' failure to carry out that mission, which, I shall argue, is critical to their negative portrayal in the Sea Crossing movement, would no longer be obscured.

### Conclusion

Jesus' promise to make Simon and Andrew fishers of people (1:17) introduces a narrative thread of logical progression that works its way through the narrative, from the callings of James and John (1:19–20) and Levi (2:14), through the appointment of the twelve, to the commissioning and sending out of the Twelve, first to Jews (6:7–13) and then to Gentiles (6:45). Together these episodes establish the content of what it means to be fishers of people. Fishers of people are in the business of catching people, of being sent out to rescue people for the kingdom of God. Their fishing takes the form of preaching repentance, exorcising demons, teaching, and anointing and healing the sick. These fishers are expected to cast their nets in both familiar and foreign waters, as they seek to catch both Jews and Gentiles. Becoming fishers of people necessitates leaving behind one's family and way of life in order to follow and be with Jesus, and it is Jesus who makes all this possible. Jesus calls, names, appoints, commissions, and equips those who are chosen to become fishers of people. He sends them forth on mission, conferring on them the authority, not merely the authorization but the power and ability, to preach and exorcise.

---

<sup>161</sup> Malbon, “Jesus,” 372.

Looking at what it means to be fishers of people, it is striking, though not necessarily surprising, that the principal actions of fishers of people are the actions Jesus principally engages in throughout the first half of Mark. According to Meye, “the fullest meaning of the expression ‘fishers of men,’ which is to be realized as a result of *following Jesus*, is to be found in *a work similar to that of Jesus*.”<sup>162</sup> Moreover, these activities are all associated, though not exclusively, with the sea and the boat, and so belongs to the Sea Crossing motif. Beside the sea, Jesus calls disciples (1:16–20; 2:14), teaches crowds, (2:13; 4:1) and heals and exorcises (3:10; 5:13); likewise Jesus teaches (4:1) and exorcises (4:39) in a boat on the sea. Thus, Jesus not only invites others to become fishers of people, Jesus himself is the model fisher.

### *The Boat*

In 1:19–20, the two references to *the boat* contribute to the narrative’s depiction of James and John as fishers. In 3:9, the boat functions as a potential means of escape and, in 4:1, as the platform from which Jesus teaches the crowd. Yet, from 4:36 onwards, the boat functions exclusively as the mode of transportation on and across the Sea of Galilee, serving as the principal means by which Jesus and his disciples travel between Jewish and Gentile territories. Intriguingly, this change in the boat’s function in 4:36 parallels the conversion of these fishers into fishers of people. That is, on the story level, the transformation of the boat from a simple fishing vessel into a means of conveyance, on the discourse level, contributes to and serves to symbolize the transformation of the disciples from simple fishers into fishers of people.

### MARK 4:35–41, EXORCISM OF THE WIND AND THE SEA — ESC<sup>1</sup>

	35	36	37	38	39	40	41
διέρχομαι	x						
πέραν	x						
πλοῖον		xx	xx				
λαῖλαψ			x				
ἄνεμος			x		xx		x
κύμα			x				
ἐπιβάλλω			x				
γεμίζω			x				

<sup>162</sup> Meye, *Jesus and the Twelve*, 108 (italics original).



πρύμνα				×			
προσκεφάλαιον				×			
ἐπιτιμάω					×		
θάλασσα					×		×
σιωπάω					×		
φιμόω					×		
κοπάζω					×		
γαλήνη					×		
ὑπακούω							×

**Figure 5–15: Members of the Sea Crossing Motif in Mark 4:35–41**

The first ESC is narrated in Mark 4:35–41 and commences on the same day that Jesus teaches the crowds in parables from his intriguing vantage, *sitting upon the sea* (καθῆσθαι ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ; 4:1). Concluding his parables discourse, Jesus suggests to his disciples that they all *cross over to the other side* (διέλθωμεν εἰς τὸ πέραν; 4:35). Their crossing is interrupted by a *great squall of wind* (λαῖλαψ μεγάλη ἀνέμου; 4:37) that stirs up the sea, producing *waves* that *beat against the boat* and threaten to capsize it (τὰ κύματα ἐπέβαλλεν εἰς τὸ πλοῖον, ὥστε ἤδη γεμίζεσθαι τὸ πλοῖον; 4:37). The frightened disciples wake Jesus, who has been asleep *in the stern on a pillow* (ἐν τῇ πρύμνῃ ἐπὶ τὸ προσκεφάλαιον; 4:38). Jesus arises and *rebukes* the wind and the sea (ἐπετίμησεν; 4:39), saying, “Quiet! Be silent!” (σιώπα, πεφίμωσο; 4:39). Immediately, the wind *ceases* (ἐκόπασεν; 4:39) and the sea becomes *exceedingly calm* (γαλήνη μεγάλη; 4:39), prompting the disciples to wonder in fearful amazement who Jesus must be that he can command such *obedience* from the wind and the sea (ὑπακούει; 4:41). In short, then, the goal of crossing to the other side of the sea is threatened by the oppositional forces of wind and sea until Jesus acts, giving rise to speculations about his identity. These three features of goal, opposition, and identity will be addressed in turn.

### *The Goal*

Three of the six Markan sea crossings begin with an expressed intention. In 4:35, Jesus says, “Let us cross over to the other side;” in 6:31, Jesus encourages his disciples saying, “Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest awhile;” and in 6:45, Jesus forces his disciples to go on ahead to the other side to Bethsaida. Of these, only the second explicitly states the purpose for the sea crossing. What, then, is the pur-

pose for the sea crossing in ESC<sup>1</sup>? Given the itinerant nature of Jesus ministry up to this point in the narrative, the reader would be safe in assuming that their crossing to the other side has mission as its objective. After all, the only other prior first-person exhortation in Mark is mission oriented. In 1:38, Jesus says to his disciples, “Let us go elsewhere to the neighboring towns that I might preach there for this is why I came out” (ἄγωμεν). Moreover, since they are crossing over to the Gentile side of the sea, the reader might also assume that this implied mission will be directed at Gentiles. Gentiles have recently come to Jesus (3:8),<sup>163</sup> so perhaps Jesus is going to them.<sup>164</sup> Both expectations are fulfilled when Jesus, in the very next episode, exorcises a Gentile demoniac.<sup>165</sup> Thus, Jesus’ exhortation that they cross over εἰς τὸ πέραν is the first indication that the proclamation and demonstration of the kingdom of God is to include Gentiles and Gentile spaces. Identifying what is implied in Jesus’ exhortation to cross over is important because it provides the context for understanding the meaning and significance of this first sea crossing. It suggests that the opposing forces of wind and sea are not simply a threat to human life but a threat to the inclusion of Gentiles under God’s apocalyptic reign.

---

<sup>163</sup> For arguments that the crowds in 3:7–12 are comprised of both Jews and Gentiles see, Iverson, *Gentiles*, 37–38, 49, 79; Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, “Galilee and Jerusalem: History and Literature in Marcan Interpretation,” in *The Interpretation of Mark* (ed. William R. Telford; 2d ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 258; repr. from CBQ 44 (1982). “Der Zustrom des Volkes auch von jenseits der Grenzen Galiläas verweist vorwegnehmend auf den universalen Charakter der neuen Gemeinschaft” (Zenji Kato, *Die Völkermission im Markusevangelium: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (EH 23/252; Bern: Peter Lang, 1986), 188).

<sup>164</sup> “The reader has been well prepared for the launching of the Gentile mission by Mark’s carefully arranged story. Jesus’ concern for all people, his penchant for crossing boundaries, and the characteristics of the kingdom described in the parables foreshadow an expansion in Jesus’ ministry that finds its fulfillment in a Gentile mission” (Iverson, *Gentiles*, 39).

<sup>165</sup> Rikki E. Watts has challenged the prevailing notion that the Gerasene demoniac is a Gentile, arguing instead that he is a Diaspora Jew. The primary warrant for identifying the man as a Gentile is his presence in Gentile territory. Watts grants that the presence of a herd of domestic pigs certainly gives the region a Gentile coloring but there is “no necessary connection between their presence and the nationality of the man” (*Isaiah’s New Exodus in Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1997), 165). Moreover, in keeping with his thesis that Mark was structured and shaped in accordance with the expectations of an Isaianic New Exodus, Watt’s argues that “Isaiah 65:1–7, which many commentators see as the background to this imagery [i.e., the references to tombs and pigs], is describing not Gentiles but Jews” (164–65). Yet, Watts is only partially correct. Certainly in its OT context, Isaiah 65 is focused upon Israel, but when Paul appeals to Isaiah 65:1–2 in Romans 10:20–21, he interprets 65:1 as referring to Gentiles and 65:2 as referring to disobedient, apostate Israel. “Paul’s use of the text to refer to the success of his own mission to the Gentiles . . . involves pulling Isa 65:1 and 2 in different directions” (James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16* (WBC 38b; Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 626). Thus, *absent any other unambiguous markers of ethnicity in the narrative*, our best argument remains that the author intends the reader to derive the demoniac’s ethnicity from the fact that he is encountered in Gentile territory, which is consistent with the function of geopolitical space in the Marcan narrative.

## Opposition

What is most striking about this storm is not so much its severity for “the Lake of Galilee is subject to sudden storms, which can be quite violent.”<sup>166</sup> Instead, what is most striking is its demonic characterization. When Jesus stills the wind and calms the sea with his authoritative command, we encounter the same vocabulary employed in his exorcisms (1:25; 3:12; 9:25). In fact, the language and structure of Jesus’ response to the wind and the sea clearly parallels, as we have already seen, that of Jesus’ exorcism in the Capernaum synagogue (1:21–28; Figure 5–5). To review, Jesus *rebukes* the unclean spirit (ἐπετίμησεν, 1:25a), which includes a command to *silence* (φριμώθητι, 1:25b) and which is immediately *obeyed* (ὑπακούουσιν αὐτῷ, 1:27c). This programmatic exorcism is echoed in ESC<sup>1</sup> when Jesus *rebukes* the wind (ἐπετίμησεν, 4:39a) and commands *silence* upon the sea (πεφίμωσο, 4:38b), which results in their immediate *obedience* (ὑπακούει αὐτῷ, 4:41c). These parallels have a two-fold effect. First, they preclude the interpretation of ESC<sup>1</sup> as a simple nature miracle; it is an exorcism that must be interpreted accordingly. It is not the created order that stands opposed to the advance of God’s kingdom but the demonic forces that have subjugated it. Second, the parallels between these episodes are such that Jesus’ actions in ESC<sup>1</sup> do not simply evoke Jesus’ exorcisms in general but his programmatic first exorcism in particular. But why?

It is not accidental or incidental that the first public act Jesus performs in Mark is a mighty deed, and an exorcism at that. Mighty deeds feature prominently in Mark’s presentation of Jesus, and exorcisms are particularly important.<sup>167</sup> Exorcisms are so pronounced in Mark because Jesus’ announcement of the good news of God’s reign takes place within an apocalyptic arena in which the two opposing kingdoms, God’s and Satan’s, are engaged in a winner-takes-all eschatological conflict. Jesus’ exorcistic activity is the primary means through which Satan’s subjugation of human beings and creation is conquered and God’s reign made effectual. Jesus’ “ministry of exorcism was not preparatory to the kingdom, nor a sign of the kingdom nor an indi-

---

<sup>166</sup> France, *Mark*, 223.

<sup>167</sup> The importance of exorcisms for Mark is easily demonstrated by the number of exorcisms narrated (1:21–28; 5:1–20; 7:24–30; 9:14–29), including summaries (1:32–34; 39; 3:11–12), by the number of other mighty deeds with exorcistic undertones (1:29–31, 40–45; 4:35–41; 6:45–52), by the fact that having authority over unclean spirits is a principal function of the Twelve (3:15; 6:7, 13; cf. 9:38), and by the controversies occasioned by exorcisms (3:21–30; 9:38–40), not to mention the numerous references to unclean spirits (13), demons (11), Satan (6), and Beelzebul (1).

cation that the kingdom had arrived, nor even an illustration of the kingdom, but actually the kingdom of God itself in operation.”<sup>168</sup> Consequently, in Mark, exorcisms are “not merely isolated incidents of compassion for individuals oppressed by malevolent forces. They [a]re direct confrontations with the kingdom of the enemy. They [a]re demonstrations of the power and presence of the Kingdom of God.”<sup>169</sup> Utilizing Mark’s own language and images, Jesus is *the stronger one* (ὁ ἰσχυρότερός, 1:7) who, through the power and authority of God’s Spirit (1:8, 10, 12; 3:29), has bound *the strong one* (ὁ ἰσχυρός; 3:27),<sup>170</sup> that is, Satan/Beelzebul, and who throughout his ministry plunders Satan’s house and possessions (3:27), by rescuing all who are possessed and oppressed by demonic forces. Understanding Jesus’ ministry as participating in God’s eschatological conflict with demonic forces helps explain why exorcisms are so prominent in Mark *and* why so many of Jesus’ other mighty deeds have an exorcistic coloring.<sup>171</sup>

### A Note on Spirits in Mark

These conclusions lead to some brief observations regarding Mark’s use of πνεῦμα. In Mark, a spiritual being that possesses or oppresses human beings is called a *demon* (δαιμόνιον, 9×) or a *spirit* (πνεύματα, 14×), terms which are used interchangeably (e.g., 6:7–13; 7:24–30). Moreover, when *spirit* is employed with this sense, it is almost always modified with *unclean* (ἀκάθαρτος, 11 of the 14×).<sup>172</sup> In Mark, then, *unclean spirit* occurs slightly more often than *demon* (11 vs. 9), the significance of which is more readily apparent when one considers that in the other Synoptics, *unclean spirit*

---

<sup>168</sup> Graham H. Twelftree, “Demon, Devil, Satan,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight and I. Howard Marshall; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1992), 168.

<sup>169</sup> David George Reese, “Demons, New Testament,” *ABD* 2:141.

<sup>170</sup> Mark 1:7 and 3:27 contain the only occurrences of ἰσχυρός in the narrative, making this connection all but certain.

<sup>171</sup> E.g., in Jesus’ cleansing of the leper, at the command of Jesus the leprosy is described as *leaving him* (ἀπῆλθεν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ, 1:42), employing language synonymous with that in the first exorcism where the unclean spirit *comes out the man* (ἐξῆλθεν ἐξ αὐτοῦ, 1:26). For more examples, see James M. Robinson, *The Problem of History in Mark* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1957), 40–41.

<sup>172</sup> The three occurrences of πνεῦμα without ἀκάθαρτος all occur within the same episode, Jesus’ final exorcism where the unclean spirit (9:25) is also designated as *a mute (and deaf) spirit* (9:17, 25) or simply as *the spirit* (9:20).

occurs much less frequently than *demon*.<sup>173</sup> So, relative to Matthew and Luke, Mark displays a decided preference for *unclean spirit* over *demon*, which serves to characterize more precisely the nature of the cosmic battle in Mark and thus the nature of Jesus' mission. Through the frequent recurrence of *unclean spirit*, the contrast between *unclean spirits* and *the holy Spirit*<sup>174</sup> is more pronounced than if *demon* had been used instead. Thus, the cosmic conflict in Mark is a struggle between two categories of spirit, the *unclean* spirits of Satan/Beelzebul (3:30) and his demonic minions versus the *holy* Spirit of God and his spirit-anointed agent, Jesus,<sup>175</sup> where ἀκάθαρτος and ἅγιος serve as antonyms.<sup>176</sup>

Unclean spirits defile by communicating impurity, sin, and sickness, whereas the holy Spirit cleanses by communicating purity, holiness, and wholeness. This spiritual conflict is made manifest, as we have seen, not only in Jesus' exorcisms but in his other mighty deeds that possess exorcistic characteristics. Thus, the reader is to see in the Baptist's prophecy that Jesus "will baptize you with the holy Spirit" (1:8), not a reference to an event that Mark never narrates (i.e., Pentecost) but a description of Jesus' entire ministry.<sup>177</sup> Everything Jesus does in Mark—his exorcisms and healings, his authoritative teachings, his pronouncements of forgiveness, his table-fellowship with tax-collectors and sinners, etc.—results in the establishment of God's kingdom by overthrowing the defiling spiritual powers via the cleansing power of the holy Spirit. "Jesus is God's holy one, and therefore able to conquer the unclean spirits, because he himself possesses God's Spirit, the power of the new age."<sup>178</sup>

---

<sup>173</sup> In part, the difference has to do with the fact that a larger percentage of Matthew's and Luke's use of πνεῦμα occurs without ἀκάθαρτος, nevertheless, the statistics are still striking.

Mark = 9 demons and 14 spirits (= 11 unclean, 1 absolute, 2 mute)

Matt = 9 demons and 4 spirits (= 2 unclean, 2 absolute)

Luke = 21 demons and 12 spirits (= 6 unclean, 3 absolute, 3 evil)

<sup>174</sup> I have chosen to capitalize *holy Spirit* in this way to emphasize the fact that holy is not just part of the Spirit's name but is Mark's way of characterizing the nature of this spirit vis-à-vis the unclean spirits. For a discussion of the almost complete absence of the expression *holy spirit* in the OT, (just three occurrences: Ps 51:11; Isa 63:10, 11) in contrast to its presence in the DSS and its increasing prominence in the NT see F. W. Horn, "Holy Spirit," *ABD* 3:261.

<sup>175</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, 33–42.

<sup>176</sup> Marcus, *Mark*, 188.

<sup>177</sup> Colin Brown, "The Jesus of Mark's Gospel," in *Jesus Then and Now: Images of Jesus in History and Christology* (ed. Marvin Meyer and Charles Hughes; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2001), 28.

<sup>178</sup> Marcus, *Mark*, 193.

Returning now to ESC<sup>1</sup>, not only do its narrative connections with 1:21–28 have the effect of transforming a nature miracle into an exorcism, thereby highlighting the demonic opposition to the spread of the kingdom, but ESC<sup>1</sup> parallels 1:21–28 in that we have another episode in which Jesus’ identity is manifest via his confrontation with the demonic. Moreover, these narrative links suggest that ESC<sup>1</sup> might function programmatically for what follows in the Sea Crossing movement in the same way that 1:21–28 functions programmatically for what follows in Movement 1. If ESC<sup>1</sup> is programmatic, then we can expect the motifs of Gentile mission, demonic opposition, and Jesus’ identity to resurface throughout the movement, which is indeed the case when we look into the remaining two episodes that are principal carriers of the Sea Crossing motif, 5:1–20 and ESC<sup>2</sup>.

### *The Identity of Jesus*

But before we consider these episodes, there remains the issue of Jesus’ identity to be discussed more fully. In 1:21–28, Jesus’ exorcism of an unclean spirit is met with astonishment, eliciting the question, “*What* is this, a new teaching with authority? He even commands the unclean spirits, and they obey him” (τί; 1:27). Similarly, Jesus’ exorcism of the stormy sea is met with awe-inspired fear, prompting the disciples to ask, “*Who* then is this that even the wind and the sea obey him?” (τίς; 4:41). Thus, both episodes conclude with rhetorical questions that raise the issue of Jesus’ identity, albeit in slightly different ways.

This linkage with the earlier passage should come as no surprise, given the likeness that has already been noted between Jesus’ rebuke of the sea and his reprimand of the Capernaum demon. But there has also been a progression beyond the earlier passage: the impersonal choral reaction to Jesus’ first exorcism in Capernaum, “*What* is this?” (1:27), has now been sharpened to the personal question “*Who* is this?” If the Capernaum exorcism was the first great demonstration of the truth of Jesus’ assertion that the dominion of God had drawn near (1:14–15), it is now becoming clearer and clearer that that dominion is concretized in Jesus himself.<sup>179</sup>

This supports what has already been argued, namely, that because ESC<sup>1</sup> evokes the Capernaum exorcism, the speculation about Jesus’ identity in 4:41 is to be understood as occasioned by a successful confrontation with demonic forces and so points

---

<sup>179</sup> Marcus, *Mark*, 340.

to Jesus' identity as the stronger one who baptizes, that is, cleanses, through the authoritative agency of God's holy Spirit.

Yet, this is only part of the picture. Contributing to the disciples' question is also the fact that Jesus' command of the wind and the sea associates him uniquely with YHWH, the God of Israel, for whom such authority is the sole prerogative. In the OT, a number of texts depict YHWH's command of wind and sea (e.g., Job 26:12; 38:8–11; Pss 65:7; 74:13–14; 89:9; 104:7; Jer 35:31), but here we focus upon Psalm 107:23–32 and Jonah 1 for, not only do they portray YHWH's authority over wind and sea, they also stand as the biblical background to Mark's presentation of Jesus in ESC<sup>1</sup>.

Meye offers compelling reasons for seeing Psalm 107 as providing the horizon for interpreting Mark's miracle stories, especially those in 4:35–8:26.<sup>180</sup> The section of the psalm particularly relevant to ESC<sup>1</sup> is 107:23–32, which extols YHWH's ability to deliver from the threats of a storm-tossed sea. In 107:25, YHWH speaks into existence a windstorm that stirs up waves in the sea (cf. Mark 4:37). Those in the boats lose courage (107:26; cf. Mark 4:40), and they cry out to YHWH in their distress (107:26; cf. Mark 4:38). YHWH responds by commanding the windstorm; it becomes calm, and the waves of the sea become silent (107:29; cf. 4:39), thus allowing them to reach their desired destination (107:30; cf. Mark 5:1).

Commentators have also observed striking similarities between ESC<sup>1</sup> and Jonah 1.<sup>181</sup> In 1:4, YHWH casts a great wind (or spirit) into the sea causing a great storm that threatens Jonah's ship (cf. Mark 4:37). Jonah, who is asleep in the hold, is aroused to help with the situation (1:6; cf. 4:38). When he informs the crew that he is fleeing from YHWH, "the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land," they fear a great fear (1:9–10; cf. 4:41). In their distress, the men cry out to YHWH (1:14; cf. 4:38b). They cast Jonah into the sea, which immediately ceases from its raging (1:15; cf. 4:39), causing the sailors to fear YHWH with a great fear (1:16; cf. 4:41).

---

<sup>180</sup> Robert P. Meye, "Psalm 107 as 'Horizon' for Interpreting the Miracle Stories of Mark 4:35–8:26," in *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology: Essays in Honor of George E. Ladd* (ed. Robert A. Guelich; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 1–13.

<sup>181</sup> E.g., O. L. Cope, *Matthew: A Scribe Trained for the Kingdom of Heaven* (CBQMS 5; Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1976), 75–76. Marcus, *Mark*, 337–38; Boring, *Mark*, 143.

“The allusion to Jon. 1:16, where fear is the reaction of the sailors in recognition of Yahweh, now shows Jesus as the one in whom Yahweh is manifested.”<sup>182</sup>

Thus, in both of these OT texts, YHWH is presented as the one to whom those in maritime distress cry out and the one who possesses the ability to command the wind and the sea. In ESC<sup>1</sup>, Jesus is implicitly and uniquely identified with YHWH for it is to Jesus that the disciples cry out in their distress, it is Jesus who calms the wind and the sea, and it is Jesus that occasions the sort of reverential fear reserved for the manifestation of divine authority.

#### MARK 5:1–20, EXORCISM OF THE GERASENE DEMONIAK

	1	2	...	13	...	18
ἐρχομαι	×					
πέραν	×					
θάλασσα	×			×		
ἐξερχομαι		×				
πλοῖον		×				×
ὁρμάω				×		
ἐμβαίνω						×

**Figure 5–16: Members of the Sea Crossing Motif in Mark 5:1–20**

Mark 5:1–20 opens with the successful completion of ESC<sup>1</sup> as Jesus and his disciples come to the other side of the sea to the region of the Gerasenes. Just as Jesus’ first public act in Jewish territory was an exorcism (1:21–28), so Jesus performs an exorcism here in his first public act in Gentile territory. In fact, a number of noteworthy connections obtain between these two episodes. In both episodes, “the possessed man appears suddenly, is termed ‘a man in an unclean spirit,’ asks ‘what do I/we have in common with you, Jesus?,’ and goes on to refer to Jesus with a title that uses the genitive ‘of God.’”<sup>183</sup> In both, the unclean spirit is afraid of destruction/torture, and in both Jesus commands the unclean spirit to come out of the man (Figure 5–17). Finally, both episodes conclude with the spreading of news about Jesus: throughout Galilee (1:28) and in the Decapolis (5:20). Such parallels, which these two episodes

<sup>182</sup> “Yet Mk 4:41 is also the inverse of Jon. 1:16, in that while Jonah is fleeing from the presence of the Lord which leads to the storm on the sea, Jesus manifests the presence of the Lord in calming the storm on the sea” (Dwyer, *Motif*, 109).

<sup>183</sup> Marcus, *Mark*, 349.



share uniquely, once again highlights the programmatic nature of the Capernaum episode and reinforces the role exorcisms play in the narrative's presentation of Jesus' mission and identity.

Mark 1:23–25 // Mark 5:2, 7–8	
1:23a	καὶ <u>εὐθὺς</u> ἦν <u>ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ αὐτῶν</u>
5:2a	καὶ ... <u>εὐθὺς</u> <u>ὑπήντησεν αὐτῷ ἐκ τῶν μνημείων</u>
1:23b	<u>ἄνθρωπος ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτω</u>
5:2b	<u>ἄνθρωπος ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτω</u>
1:23b	<u>ἀνέκραξεν</u> <u>λέγων·</u>
5:7a	<u>κράξας</u> φωνῇ μεγάλῃ <u>λέγει·</u>
1:24a	<u>τί ἡμῖν καὶ σοί, Ἰησοῦ Ναζαρηνέ;</u>
5:7b	<u>τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, Ἰησοῦ</u>
1:24c*	οἶδά σε τίς εἶ, <u>ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ.</u>
5:7c	<u>υἱὲ τοῦ θεοῦ</u> τοῦ ὑψίστου;
1:24b*	<u>ἦλθες ἀπολέσαι ἡμᾶς;</u>
5:7d	ὀρκίζω σε τὸν θεόν, μή με βασανίσῃς.
1:25a	καὶ ἐπετίμησεν <u>αὐτῷ</u> ὁ Ἰησοῦς <u>λέγων·</u>
5:8a	<u>ἔλεγεν γὰρ αὐτῷ·</u>
1:25b	φιμώθητι καὶ <u>ἔξελθε</u> <u>ἐξ αὐτοῦ.</u>
5:8b	<u>ἔξελθε</u> τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἀκάθαρτον <u>ἐκ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.</u>

\*The sequence of 1:24b and 1:24c has been reversed.

**Figure 5–17: Horizontal-Line Synopsis of Mark 1:23–25 and Mark 5:2, 7–8**

Given the connections between ESC<sup>1</sup> and 1:21–28, it is not surprising that there are also a number of noteworthy connections between Jesus' confrontation with the Gerasene demoniac and his confrontation with the wind and the sea in ESC<sup>1</sup>. First, these two episodes form a narrative progression; the safe arrival of Jesus following his calming of the sea allows him to expand his mission into Gentile territory, which was implied in his aforementioned exhortation that they cross over to the other side. Second, the condition of the demoniac, the severity of which is described in vivid detail, evokes the life-threatening, chaotic condition of the stormy sea. The magnitude of Jesus' exorcism of the wind and the sea is matched by that of his exorcism, not of one but, of a legion of unclean spirits. Moreover, the description of the man as *clothed and in his right mind* (5:15) bespeaks of a change akin to that of the *great calm* that comes upon the sea (4:39). Third, the two mighty exorcisms elicit similar responses. When the people behold the transformed state of the ex-demoniac, they, like the disciples in the previous episode, *become afraid* (ἐφοβήθησαν, 5:15; ἐφο-

βήθησαν φόβον μέγαν, 4:41).<sup>184</sup> Finally, in both episodes the sea is associated with the demonic, in ESC<sup>1</sup> via Jesus' exorcistic response to the tumultuous sea and in 5:1–20 via the maritime demise of the demon-possessed pigs.

These connections contribute to and reinforce the narrative associations that were established in ESC<sup>1</sup> between Gentile mission, demonic opposition, and Jesus' identity. The context for the whole episode is that of Gentile mission; Jesus has crossed the sea in order to engage in mission within Gentile territory and upon arrival is immediately met by a Gentile demoniac whom he heals.<sup>185</sup> While one healing does not constitute a mission, Jesus is prohibited from further activity, not because of any demonic opposition but, because the locals beg him to leave their region (5:17). This illustrates a recurrent feature of the Markan narrative that will be of some consequence later in the study, namely, the fact that Jesus exercises absolute authority over demonic forces but not over human agents. For example, Jesus cleanses a leper with a word, but not even a stern warning can keep the leper quiet about his cleansing (1:40–45). Nevertheless, the episode concludes with a Gentile mission of sorts, as the exorcised man makes Jesus known in the Decapolis.

Jesus' successful confrontation with demonic forces uniquely identifies him with YHWH, and so provides an initial response to the disciples' unanswered question regarding Jesus' identity (4:41). This occurs in three ways. First, when Jesus insists that Legion exit the man, the spirit identifies him as the Son of the Most High God (5:5). More subtly, the fear the people experience upon seeing the ex-demoniac is the same sort of awe-inspired fear the disciples experienced when Jesus exhibited YHWH-like authority over the wind and the sea.<sup>186</sup> Finally, when Jesus commands the man to go home and tell his own all that *the Lord*, that is, YHWH, has done for him, he instead proclaims throughout the Decapolis what *Jesus* has done for him (5:20). This strategy of subtly identifying *Jesus* and *YHWH* occurs elsewhere in Mark, most notably in the Markan prologue where John the Baptist is the Isaianic voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare the way of the Lord," that is, Jesus (1:3; cf. 11:3). Thus, once again in association with Gentile mission, demonic opposition provides an occasion for Jesus' divine identity to become manifest to both characters and the reader.

---

<sup>184</sup> These are the only two occurrences of φοβέω up to this point in the narrative.

<sup>185</sup> For a defense of the demoniac's non-Jewish ethnicity, see footnote 165.

<sup>186</sup> Dwyer, *Motif*, 113–14.

	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52
ἐμβαίνω	×							
πλοῖον	×		×				×	
πέραν	×							
θάλασσα			×	×	×			
ἐλαύνω				×				
ἄνεμος				×			×	
περιπατέ				×	×			
ἀναβαίνω							×	
κοπάζω							×	

Figure 5–18: Members of the Sea Crossing Motif in Mark 6:45–52

The final, principal carrier of the Sea Crossing motif to consider is Mark 6:45–52, ESC<sup>2</sup>, in which the narrative associations between Gentile mission, demonic opposition, and Jesus’ identity receive further development. This episode was discussed in detail in relation to the disciples’ vocation to become fishers of persons. These earlier discussions establish the context within which the events of ESC<sup>2</sup> unfold and are presupposed in what follows.

### *The Goal*

To review, when Jesus forces his disciples to embark for Bethsaida in 6:45, he is sending them on an apostolic mission among and to Gentiles, meaning that ESC<sup>2</sup> has the same purpose as ESC<sup>1</sup>, the expansion of the kingdom into Gentile lands.<sup>187</sup> There is, however, one major difference between the goals of these first two ESCs, namely, that in ESC<sup>2</sup> the boat never arrives at its intended Gentile destination; ESC<sup>2</sup> is a failed sea crossing, and consequently the disciples fail to fulfill Jesus’ expectations for their journey. This failure, however, is not an isolated element but the culmination, and perhaps the result, of a number of other failures experienced by the disciples dur-

<sup>187</sup> In “Das Markusevangelium: Komposition und Intention der ersten Darstellung christlicher Mission,” ANRW II.25.3 (1985), Gottfried Rau argues that in 6:45 the disciples are being sent on an apostolic mission to *Israelites* who live outside Jewish Galilee and so “are regarded as sinners from a legal standpoint” (2122). Rau notes that this journey outside Galilee (ESC<sup>2</sup>) is as turbulent for the apostles as the first one (ESC<sup>1</sup>), and cites Schreiber who says, “According to Mark, not once do the disciples manage to cross into Gentile territory alone. Jesus must either be there from the outset or later intervene. They do not want to enter the ‘Galilee of the Gentiles’” (Johannes Schreiber, *Theologie des Vertrauens: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung des Markusevangeliums* (Hamburg: Furchen-Verlag, 1967), 206) (2122).

ing this sea crossing, failures that are linked to demonic opposition, on the one hand, and Jesus' identity, on the other.

### *Opposition*

Jesus, of course, remains behind to dismiss the crowd. When evening comes, Jesus, who is alone on the land, sees the disciples in the middle of the sea *tortured in their rowing* (βασανιζομένους ἐν τῷ ἐλαύνειν) against *an adverse wind* (ἦν γὰρ ὁ ἄνεμος ἐναντίος αὐτοῖς; 6:48). Given the identification of the wind with the demonic in ESC<sup>1</sup>, it is likely that the adverse wind here is also to be regarded as demonic. This is corroborated by the fact that the wind suddenly *ceases* when Jesus enters the boat (ἐκόπασεν, 6:51), which is what the demonized wind in ESC<sup>1</sup> does in response to Jesus' exorcising rebuke (ἐκόπασεν, 4:39). Moreover,

The verb βασανίζω itself suggests that a demonic force animates the adversarial wind. Elsewhere in Mark's gospel, the same verb characterizes Jesus' treatment of the evil entity that has gripped the Gerasene demoniac in an apparent apocalyptic showdown (5:7). And although some interpreters infer in the disciples' "tormenting" here only the rather mild misfortune of a wind hindering the rowers' intended progress, the verb's use in ancient literature regularly conveys the hostile intent of the tormenting power.<sup>188</sup>

Given that the purpose for crossing the sea is for the disciples to engage in a Gentile mission, their inability to make progress against the adverse wind is to be interpreted as demonic opposition to their Gentile mission. Thus, the adverse wind in ESC<sup>2</sup> functions in the same way as the wind and the sea functioned in ESC<sup>1</sup>, which means that its cessation in ESC<sup>2</sup> once again illustrates Jesus' authority over demonic forces.

Yet, if Jesus eliminates the obstacle inhibiting the disciples from crossing the sea, why do they not continue on to Gentile Bethsaida but instead cross over to Jewish Gennesaret? As discussed above, various solutions have been offered to account for this geographical "anomaly." I argued that the Bethsaida-Gennesaret discrepancy is intentional, which challenges theories based upon a rearrangement of traditional sources. The popular assertion that the boat was blown off course was deemed plausible but inadequate because, ultimately, it does not explain *why* the sea crossing, and with it the disciples' Gentile mission, was abandoned though Jesus' entry into the

---

<sup>188</sup> Henderson, *Christology and Discipleship*, 221–22. Cf. Marcus, *Mark*, 423, 430–31.

boat and the subsequent cessation of the adverse wind affords them unencumbered passage to Bethsaida.

Though Henderson's study does not actually address the Bethsaida-Gennesaret discrepancy,<sup>189</sup> her reading of the disciples' failure is suggestive and offers a much better explanation of the episode than that generally offered. As presented in the literature review, Henderson identifies the disciples' principal failure as a failure to exercise their authority to exorcise unclean spirits. They lack "trust in God's dominion and its triumphant power, which Jesus has already conferred upon them,"<sup>190</sup> and so do not avail themselves of their exorcistic authority over the demonic wind as Jesus had done in ESC<sup>1</sup>. Henderson may very well be correct, but if so, this only explains part of their failure. The fundamental weakness in Henderson's explanation is her assessment of the nature of the disciples' mission. Based upon parallels with the first missionary journey, Henderson argues that in 6:45 Jesus is sending the disciples forth on a second missionary journey,<sup>191</sup> but she fails to discern the precise nature of that mission.

[T]he narrative's measured, frame-by-frame account of Jesus' deliberate removal from the disciples combines with the insistence that they "go ahead of" him to suggest that this second sea-crossing story also constitutes the second "missionary journey" of the disciples. In the first [i.e., 6:7–13], they have laid claim to God's dominion within the human sphere, where they have preached, healed, and cast out demons; now they go forth to assert God's dominion by subduing the adverse spiritual powers associated with the sea.<sup>192</sup>

In other words, for Henderson, the sea crossing itself constitutes the disciples' mission, not anything that they are being sent to do upon their arrival on the other side.

Yet, this is to confuse the part for the whole, the means for the end. In ESC<sup>1</sup>, Jesus' exorcism of the wind and the sea was not the goal of the sea crossing but the necessary means to carry out the goal, which was to do in Gentile territory what he had been doing in Jewish territory. Likewise, his sending forth the disciples on a second missionary tour has as its goal the carrying out of a successful Gentile mission to parallel their recently successful Jewish mission. Therefore, if, as Henderson claims,

---

<sup>189</sup> Her argument shows not the slightest hint of a geographical problem; e.g., see Henderson, *Christology and Discipleship*, 217n44.

<sup>190</sup> Henderson, *Christology and Discipleship*, 232.

<sup>191</sup> Henderson, *Christology and Discipleship*, 213–16, 236–37.

<sup>192</sup> Henderson, *Christology and Discipleship*, 219–20.

“Jesus sends them ahead with the full expectation that they wield the power necessary to assert God’s apocalyptic dominion over the demonic forces of the sea,”<sup>193</sup> he does so with the understanding that this is merely the means for extending their apostolic commission to the Gentile peoples on the opposite shore; after all, their authority to exorcise unclean spirits belongs to their vocation to become fishers of *people*. Henderson rightly sees that “Jesus’ intentional dismissal of the group [and] their ‘going ahead’ of him”<sup>194</sup> evokes the disciples’ first missionary journey and so implies a second missionary journey; yet she does not follow her insight to its logical conclusion, namely, that this second mission parallels the first in every way except with respect to its intended audience.

If Henderson had better discerned the nature and purpose of this second mission, then perhaps she would have paid more attention to the sea crossing’s interesting geography and recognized that the disciples’ failure to exercise their exorcistic authority belongs to a much larger failure, namely, the failure to reach Bethsaida and so engage in an apostolic mission among Gentiles. Nevertheless, Henderson’s reading provides additional support for my argument that, in ESC<sup>2</sup>, we encounter another illustration of demonic opposition to Gentile mission. Yet, the recognition of demonic opposition still does not explain why the Gentile mission is abandoned. Could it be, then, that demonic opposition is not the only obstacle to the disciples’ carrying out their Gentile commission?

I would propose that this indeed is the case, that clues in the narrative point to the disciples’ being resistant to being sent on an apostolic mission to Gentiles, which accounts for why the sea crossing concludes at Gennesaret instead of Bethsaida. The first indication of the disciple’s resistance occurs at the beginning of the episode where Jesus must *force* them to embark for Bethsaida (ἠνάγκασεν, 6:45). The verb ἀναγκάζω is a three-place predicator requiring Agent, Experiencer, and Content arguments and so refers to someone (Agt) getting someone else (Exp) to do something (Con). Ἀναγκάζω can be employed in a strong sense, “to compel someone to act in a particular manner, *compel*, *force*,” or in a weakened sense, “to strongly urge/invite, *urge upon* or *press*.”<sup>195</sup> Either way, ἀναγκάζω implies some level of reluc-

---

<sup>193</sup> Henderson, *Christology and Discipleship*, 215.

<sup>194</sup> Henderson, *Christology and Discipleship*, 236–37.

<sup>195</sup> BDAG, “ἀναγκάζω,” 60; Cf. “to cause or compel someone in all the varying degrees from friendly pressure to forceful compulsion” (Walter Grundmann, “ἀναγκάζω,” *TDNT* 1:345).

tance or resistance on the part of the Experiencer to carry out the Content.<sup>196</sup> In this instance, ἡνάγκασεν implies resistance or reluctance on the part of the disciples to embark in the boat and go on ahead to the other side.<sup>197</sup> Oddly, most scholars who interpret ἡνάγκασεν in this way never explore what stands behind the disciples' resistance. LaVerdiere suggests some possibilities but concludes that such questions are best left open since "motives for resistance are often complex."<sup>198</sup> Myers suggests that the disciples are experiencing separation anxiety: "If the first journey [i.e., ESC<sup>1</sup>] was made under the 'protection' of the present Jesus, in the second the disciples are compelled to make the crossing on their own. . . . Veterans of one dangerous crossing, the disciples appear to be reluctant to repeat the journey."<sup>199</sup> This is possible, though not particularly persuasive. Instead, given that the required Content argument for ἡνάγκασεν is explicitly identified as embarking and going before Jesus to Bethsaida and given our argument that this purposeful separation from Jesus implies an apostolic Gentile mission, it stands to reason that what the disciples are resistant to, and thus why Jesus' must force them to embark, is their being sent out to fish for Gentiles.<sup>200</sup> One advantage of positing disciple resistance to Gentile mission is its ability to account for the narrator's charge of hardness of heart leveled at the disciples (6:52), which has been a notorious crux of interpretation. The disciples' hardness of heart

---

<sup>196</sup> Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of Mark* (HP 2; Leiden: Brill, 1961), 211. In biblical literature, ἀναγκάζω most often carries the stronger connotation. For example, ἀναγκάζω occurs frequently in the Maccabean literature in contexts where Jews are under compulsion to engage in practices that contradict their religious, cultural, and ethnic identity; they are *forced* to offer abominable sacrifices (1 Macc 2:25), *forced* to forsake the law of their ancestors (2 Macc 6:1), *forced* to eat swine's flesh (2 Macc 6:18; 7:1), etc. In Acts 26:11, Paul describes his prior persecution of the church as an attempt to *force* Jewish-Christians to commit blasphemy. Of course, none of these contexts are determinative for the meaning of ἀναγκάζω in Mark 6:45; only the Markan context can be used to determine whether ἀναγκάζω is being employed in its stronger sense, implying the disciples' *resistance*, or in its weaker sense, implying their *reluctance*. Nevertheless, it is significant that in 18 out of its 27 occurrences in biblical literature (not counting Mark 6:45 and its Matthean parallel, 14:22), ἀναγκάζω occurs in contexts that are either directly (13 = 1 Macc 2:25; 2 Macc 6:1, 7, 18; 7:1; 4 Macc 4:26; 5:2, 27; 8:2; 18:5; Gal 2:3, 14; 6:12) or indirectly (5 = 2 Macc 8:24; 11:11, 14; 4 Macc 8:9; 15:7) concerned with matters of Jewish identity vis-à-vis Gentiles.

<sup>197</sup> So conclude Boring, *Mark*, 188; Gundry, *Mark*, 335; Myers, *Binding*, 196; Malbon, "Jesus," 370; Young, *Subversive Symmetry*, 117; Eugene A. LaVerdiere, *The Beginning of the Gospel: Introducing the Gospel according to Mark* (2 vols.; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1999), 1:178.

<sup>198</sup> LaVerdiere, *Beginning*, 1:178.

<sup>199</sup> Myers, *Binding*, 196.

<sup>200</sup> "Everything indicates that Jesus had intended a missionary journey toward Gentile territory but that the disciples resisted going" (LaVerdiere, *Beginning*, 1:179). There is, of course, the possibility that the disciples are not opposed to Gentile mission as such but are merely reluctant to go it alone without Jesus; yet if this were the case, we would expect them to continue on to Bethsaida once Jesus was back with them in the boat.

will be discussed more fully later, but, suffice it to say, such strong language implies purposeful resistance on the part of the disciples, and so is another indication of the disciple's opposition to Gentile mission, which in turn corroborates the reading of ἡνάγκασεν as implying resistance, and not mere reluctance.

The question now becomes, why are Jesus' disciples so resistant to being sent out on a Gentile mission? The simplest and most obvious answer is that they are Jews and Jews just do not do Gentile mission. There is ample evidence for this in Acts and the Pauline epistles where Jewish-Christian opposition to Gentile mission is a major issue. To answer this question, then, one could work through these texts and construct a list of specific objections to Gentile mission under the assumption that one or more of these are animating the disciples' resistance. This would certainly be justifiable on the premise that the Markan narrative presumes some familiarity with distinctions between Jews and Gentiles that the implied reader would be expected to invoke when confronted with the disciples' resistance to Gentile mission. Yet, there is evidence within the Markan narrative itself that provides the reader with the background necessary for understanding more precisely the nature of the disciples' resistance to Gentile mission. Here we will look at one of the factors contributing to the disciples' resistance, which belongs to the Sea Crossing motif in so far as it relates to the disciples' vocation as fishers of people. The other contributing factor will be discussed in connection with The Loaves motif.

Prior to their first missionary venture, Jesus establishes specific guidelines for how their mission is to proceed. Jesus orders his disciples to take nothing with them except a staff; no bread, no provision bag, no money in their belts. They are to have their sandals strapped up, and they are not to wear two tunics. Upon entering a house, they are to remain there until they leave the area (6:8–10). These instructions have prompted numerous discussions, some centered around the similarities and difference between these and the missionary instructions found in Matthew and Luke, some concerned with how these relate to the itinerant practices that characterize other contemporary groups, most notably the Cynics and the Essenes,<sup>201</sup> and some

---

<sup>201</sup> "The instructions also reflect, in comparison and contrast, the practice of traveling philosophers and preachers as represented by Cynics and Pythagoreans among the Gentiles, and Essenes among the Jews. Cynics were instructed to take a staff for self-defense, and a begging bag for their provisions, but to go barefoot, beg their living from supportive hearers, and dwell alone. Essene emissaries carried a staff and wore sandals, but needed to carry no provisions because they lodged en route with fellow members of their sect who provided for them" (Boring, *Mark*, 175). See Josephus, *J. W.*, 2:124–27.



concentrated upon the possible connections with the Exodus traditions.<sup>202</sup> Whatever their symbolic or evocative significance, our interest here is in their practical significance, that is, in understanding the practical effects such instructions would have on the disciples' apostolic mission. For example, it has been suggested that two tunics might be needed to keep warm when sleeping out of doors.<sup>203</sup> If so, the prohibition against wearing two tunics implies that the disciples are expected to depend upon others for their shelter,<sup>204</sup> which connects this prohibition with Jesus' command to remain as houseguests in whatever house they find themselves in (6:10). Likewise, the prohibition against taking along any bread, money, or a provision bag (6:8),<sup>205</sup> requires the disciples to depend upon others for food. Thus, whatever else their significance, the practical implications of these missionary guidelines is that Jesus' disciples, when engaging in their apostolic vocation, must rely upon the hospitality of those to whom they are sent for their basic needs of food and shelter,<sup>206</sup> which involves trusting in God's provision.<sup>207</sup>

Given these implications, we now have a narrative basis for understanding one of the factors contributing to the disciples' resistance in ESC<sup>2</sup>. If Jesus is sending them forth on a Gentile mission and if they are expected to follow these same missionary guidelines, as I argued previously, then these Jewish missionaries would have to depend upon the hospitality of Gentiles for their basic needs of food and shelter. The disciples would be required to reside in Gentile residences, share table with Gentiles, and partake of food that would, at worst, include unclean animals and, at best, not have been prepared according to Jewish purity regulations. Such a mission would offer a significant challenge to the disciples' ethnic, religious, and cultural sensibilities; one only need consider Peter's struggles in Acts 10 and Galatians 2 to know how

---

<sup>202</sup> Boring, *Mark*, 175; Marcus, *Mark*, 389–90.

<sup>203</sup> France, *Mark*, 249; Gundry, *Mark*, 308; Marcus, *Mark*, 383; cf. Moloney, *Mark*, 121n19.

<sup>204</sup> Or, perhaps it implies their dependence upon others for additional clothing if their only tunic wears out. See Josephus, *J.W.*, 2:126–27 regarding Essene practices with respect to clothes wearing out.

<sup>205</sup> “The walking staff, along with the provision bag, was associated with the wandering Cynic philosophers, who were numerous in the first century; Epictetus, for example, quotes the popular opinion that the distinguishing marks of a Cynic are ‘his provision-bag and his staff and his big mouth’ (Arrian, *Discourses of Epictetus* 3.22.50). . . . [The provision bag] became a standard part of the equipment of wandering Cynics and was linked with the Stoic/Cynic ideal of self-sufficiency. This linkage may be part of the reason for the Markan Jesus’ rejection of the provision bag: the Christian missionary is not self-sufficient but empowered by God” (Marcus, *Mark*, 383).

<sup>206</sup> France, *Mark*, 248–49; Gundry, *Mark*, 308–9; LaVerdiere, *Beginning*, 1:32, 107, 156.

<sup>207</sup> Boring, *Mark*, 175; Marcus, *Mark*, 388–89.

true and significant this is. No wonder Jesus must force them to embark for Bethsaida.<sup>208</sup>

How, then, does this understanding of the disciples' resistance to Gentile mission help explain the Bethsaida-Gennesaret discrepancy? Earlier we highlighted an interesting feature concerning the Markan Jesus, namely, the fact that Jesus exercises absolute authority over demonic forces but never over human agents. If the disciples are fundamentally opposed to participating in a Gentile mission, Jesus cannot (or does not or will not) force them to complete that mission, anymore than he can force them to take up their crosses and follow him later in the gospel. Landing at Gennesaret instead of continuing onto Bethsaida is consistent with the nature of Jesus' authority as presented in Mark. This is why I would contend that demonic opposition is not the only or even the primary obstacle to Gentile mission that is encountered in ESC<sup>2</sup>. Instead, the primary obstacle to Gentile mission is the disciples themselves, at the root of which stands their identity as Jews vis-à-vis Gentiles. As we shall see, subsequent to their aborted sea crossing and aborted Gentile mission, Jesus attempts to counter the disciples' resistance by removing certain obstacles to Gentile mission and attempting to open their eyes and ears and hearts.

### *The Identity of Jesus*

In ESC<sup>1</sup>, Jesus' identity was manifest through his authority over the wind and the sea; similarly, in ESC<sup>2</sup>, Jesus' identity is manifest through the authority he exhibits via his walking upon the sea and his calming of the wind. In fact, the manifestation of Jesus' divine identity is even more pronounced in ESC<sup>2</sup>. "The miracle story itself, though sharing some elements the deliverance story in 4:35–41, is primarily an epiphany story modeled on the epiphanies of Yahweh in the Old Testament."<sup>209</sup>

### Walking upon the Sea

After Jesus dismisses the disciples and the crowd, he withdraws to the mountain to pray, where he observes the torturous progress the disciples are making against the adverse

---

<sup>208</sup> So also, LaVerdiere, *Beginning*, 1:214.

<sup>209</sup> Boring, *Mark*, 189.

wind. Just before dawn, the proverbial hour of divine deliverance,<sup>210</sup> Jesus makes his way to the disciples by walking upon the sea. In the ancient, Greco-Roman world, *walking upon the sea*, a motif belonging to “the larger theme of control of the sea,”<sup>211</sup> was regarded as a distinctively divine act, a peculiar prerogative of the gods. Thus, when heroic and legendary figures (Orion, Abaris, Heracles, Pythagoras, Euphemus), cultural heroes (Moses, Joshua, Elijah, Elisha), and renown rulers (Xerxes, Alexander the Great, Caligula) are portrayed as traversing the sea or other bodies of water in extraordinary ways, it was a sign of their divine status or privileged position with the gods.<sup>212</sup> “The motif of walking on water [became] proverbial for the (humanly) impossible” and was employed negatively to characterize “the arrogance of . . . ruler[s] aspiring to empire.”<sup>213</sup>

For our purposes, it is significant that, of the gods and heroes depicted as traversing the sea, very few are actually described as *walking upon* the sea. (1) For example, Poseidon (or Neptune), the only Greco-Roman god “associated with traveling over the sea . . . is drawn across the water by the sea beasts. However, the god who walks across the sea as well as trampling it with sea horses is the Jewish God.”<sup>214</sup> In the OT, depictions of YHWH traversing the sea employ victory-over-chaos creation imagery, generally in retellings of the Exodus event (e.g., Ps 77:19–20; Isa 43:16–17; 51:9–10; Hab 3:12–15; cf. God’s personified Wisdom in Sir 24:5–6; Wis 10:17–18). Job 9:8 is particularly interesting in this regard. In response to Bildad, Job defends the impossibility of any human being contending with God who alone stretched out the heavens and *trampled the waves of the Sea* (וְדָרַךְ עַל-בְּמֹתַי יָם). The LXX renders this

---

<sup>210</sup> By Roman reckoning, the fourth watch of the night encompasses the predawn hours of 3:00 to 6:00 a.m., which in biblical and Jewish literature was a time associated with God’s salvific actions (e.g., Exod 14:24; Ps 46:5; 130:6; Isa 17:14; Jos. and Asen. 14:1–3; L.A.B. 42:3). Henderson, *Christology and Discipleship*, 223; Marcus, *Mark*, 423.

<sup>211</sup> Adela Yarbro Collins, “Rulers, Divine Men, and Walking on the Water (Mark 6:45–52),” in *Religious Propaganda and Missionary Competition in the New Testament World: Essays Honoring Dieter Georgi* (ed. Lukas Bormann, Kelly Del Tredici and Angela Standhartinger; NovTSup 74; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 212.

<sup>212</sup> For primary texts and discussions see M. Eugene Boring, Klaus Berger, and Carsten Colpe, eds., *Hellenistic Commentary to the New Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), §§110–12; Collins, “Rulers,” 207–27; Wendy Cotter, ed., *Miracles in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook for the Study of New Testament Miracle Stories* (CEC 1; New York: Routledge, 1999), 131–63, esp. 148–63; and Patrick J. Madden, *Jesus’ Walking on the Sea: An Investigation of the Origin of the Narrative Account* (BZNW 81; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), 49–61.

<sup>213</sup> Antiochus IV Epiphanes is so characterized in 2 Macc 5:21, as is Alexander the Great by the Attic poet, Menander (Collins, “Rulers,” 219–220).

<sup>214</sup> Cotter, *Miracles*, 148.

somewhat differently, saying God alone stretched out the heaven and *walks upon the sea as upon the ground* (περιπατῶν ὡς ἐπ’ ἐδάφους ἐπὶ θαλάσσης),<sup>215</sup> which employs the exact same phrasing (absent the article) as Mark 6:48, περιπατῶν ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης.<sup>216</sup> To what extent this connection between Mark 6:48 and Job 9:8 is intentional remains to be seen. In any case, Job’s use of this sea-walking imagery is designed to highlight the radical divide between God and human beings, and in Mark this same imagery is applied to Jesus. (2) Similarly, “Jewish tradition holds no story of a hero walking on the sea, which is possibly because it is seen as a prerogative of the Most High.” Instead “the one sea miracle repeated among Jewish heroes is that of dividing the water.”<sup>217</sup> Jesus, however, is not depicted as dividing the sea but as walking upon it, there again doing what only Israel’s God is ever portrayed as doing. Thus, for a general Greco-Roman audience, Jesus’ walking upon the sea would connect him with the gods, but for those familiar with the precise nuances of this imagery, such an act would uniquely identify Jesus with the creating and delivering acts of Israel’s God,<sup>218</sup> giving this epiphany the more explicit character of a YHWH theophany.<sup>219</sup>

This conclusion is readily confirmed by the presence of other epiphanic and theophanic elements in the episode. First, there is the enigmatic phrase, καὶ ἤθελεν παρελθεῖν αὐτούς (6:48), which has been a source of much discussion and speculation.<sup>220</sup> How is one to make sense of the fact that Jesus, in coming to the aid of his tortured disciples, (1) intends to pass by them but then (2) “joins them in the boat after all?”<sup>221</sup> The most viable solution, and the one that has garnered the most scholarly

<sup>215</sup> Of its 63 occurrences in the MT, only here is דָּרָךְ (to tread, to march) rendered περιπατέω (to walk) in the LXX.

<sup>216</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:914.

<sup>217</sup> Cotter, *Miracles*, 151.

<sup>218</sup> Collins, “Rulers,” 224.

<sup>219</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:916. “The fact that it is God alone in the Hebrew Bible who is said to walk on water and the presence of theophanic elements in the story imply a relatively ‘high’ Christology, . . . [which] is not impossible in Jewish Christianity” (Collins, “Rulers,” 224).

<sup>220</sup> For reviews of the various proposals see, Bas M. F. van Iersel, “KAI HΘELEN PARELTHEIN AYTOYΣ: Another Look at Mark 6,48d,” in *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck* (ed. F. van Segbroeck; BETL 100; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 1065–76; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:916–71; 1000–1; Thierry Snoy, “Marc 6,48: ‘et il voulait les dépasser’: proposition pour la solution d’une énigme,” in *L’Évangile selon Marc: Tradition et rédaction* (ed. Maurits Sabbe; 2d ed.; BETL 34; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1988), 347–63.

<sup>221</sup> van Iersel, “Another Look,” 1065–66.

support,<sup>222</sup> is to see in Jesus' intention to pass by an allusion to OT theophanies where YHWH reveals himself by *passing by*. So, in Exodus, YHWH promises to make his glory *pass by* Moses (παρελεύσομαι, 33:19; παρέλθῃ, 33:22) and then in fulfillment YHWH *passes by* Moses (παρήλθεν, 34:6). This same expression recurs in 1 Kings where YHWH *passes by* Elijah (παρελεύσεται, 19:11). According to Marcus, under the impact of these passages παρερχομαι "became almost a technical term for a divine epiphany in the Septuagint."<sup>223</sup> Meier, therefore, offers the following translation as a way to bring out the import of the expression: "Jesus comes to them, walking on the water, *for* he wished to pass by them [i.e., reveal himself to them in an epiphany]."<sup>224</sup>

Of course, if this theophanic reading is correct, we must conclude that Jesus' theophany fails. Certainly, upon seeing Jesus pass by, the disciples cry out in terror (6:50), which, according to Dwyer, is an appropriate response for those witnessing an epiphany.<sup>225</sup> Yet, on this occasion, the disciples' terror is due, not to their recognition of Jesus' divine identity, but to their mistaking him for a phantom. Jesus' attempt at divine self-revelation thus fails, which is why van Iersel dismisses καὶ ἤθελεν παρελθεῖν αὐτούς as carrying any theophanic undertones.<sup>226</sup> Van Iersel, however, does not consider the fact that the presence of "the otherwise unnecessary ἤθελεν"<sup>227</sup> anticipates the disciples' misidentification of Jesus.<sup>228</sup> Interestingly, the failure of Jesus'

---

<sup>222</sup> Most notably, Bolt, *Defeat*, 194; Boring, *Mark*, 190. Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 213; Guelich, *Mark*, 350; Gundry, *Mark*, 336; John Paul Heil, *Jesus Walking on the Sea: Meaning and Gospel Functions of Matt 14:22–33, Mark 6:45–52 and John 6:15b–21* (AnBib 87; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981), 69–72; Henderson, *Christology and Discipleship*, 225; Lane, *Mark*, 236; Ernst Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus* (Supplement, 3d. ed.; KEK 1/2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 133. Marcus, *Mark*, 423–26; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 916–17; Myers, *Binding*, 197; Rau, "Markusevangelium," 2122–24; Watts, *New Exodus*, 231. But not France, *Mark*, 271–272; van Iersel, "Another Look," 1068; Snoy, "Marc 6,48," 357–60.

<sup>223</sup> Marcus, *Mark*, 426. In further support of his claim, Marcus notes that παρερχομαι was inserted into theophanic contexts in the LXX that lacked it in the MT, e.g., Dan 12:1 and Gen 32:31–32.

<sup>224</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:917. Here καὶ, which "sometimes introduc[es] an explanation, especially in Semitic Greek," is translated with *for* (2:916–917).

<sup>225</sup> Dwyer, *Motif*, 131.

<sup>226</sup> van Iersel, "Another Look," 1068. Van Iersel does regard Jesus' walking upon the sea as possessing theophanic connotations, he simply does not see the his passing by as sharing those connotations. Instead, he interprets Jesus' desire to pass by as his (failed) attempt to regain the lead and take the disciples to the other side.

<sup>227</sup> Gundry, *Mark*, 336.

<sup>228</sup> Note the other instances in Mark where a character's desire to do something goes unfulfilled due to the actions of others and where the same semantic construction occurs as in 6:48, θέλω plus an infinitive clause instantiating the required Content argument. Herodias wanted to kill John but could not on account of Herod's fear of John (6:19), and Jesus did not want to be known when he entered Tyre, but he was unsuccessful (7:24).

passing by to elicit the proper recognition brings us back to Job 9. Whereas Job 9:8 was previously highlighted for its treatment of sea walking as a uniquely divine act, here the disciples' failure to recognize Jesus in his theophanic passing by resonates with Job 9:11: "If he passed over me, I would not see him; and if he *passes by* me (παρέλθῃ), I would not know it."<sup>229</sup>

Another major theophoric element is Jesus' use of the divine ἐγώ εἰμι. In the LXX, ἐγώ εἰμι occurs in contexts where Israel's god discloses his unique, divine identity as YHWH, most notably, in his self-revelation to Moses from the burning bush where he says, ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν (Exod 3:14; cf. Deut 32:29; Isa 41:4; 43:10). Of course, ἐγώ εἰμι can also be used colloquially simply to mean "it's me," as occurs in John 9:9. Yet, couched here, as it is, between "two divine imperatives,"<sup>230</sup> (i.e., θαρσέω and φοβέω) and participating, as it does, in a context already ripe with theophoric undertones, Jesus' use of ἐγώ εἰμι undoubtedly evokes its divine Septuagintal connotation, at least at the level of the narrative's discourse if not within the story world itself. That is, it is quite possible, as some have suggested, that the disciples as characters within the story are only expected to hear in Jesus' ἐγώ εἰμι, the pedestrian, "It's me, Jesus," whereas the implied reader alone is to hear the divine, "I am."<sup>231</sup> Yet, given that the disciples (and not just the implied reader) are privy to Jesus' theophoric walking upon the sea and theophoric passing by, I think it more probable that both connotations are available to the disciples and that their failure to see beyond the pedestrian use of ἐγώ εἰμι to its divine sense further highlights the depth of their incomprehension and culpability. Thus, to calm their fear, Jesus speaks to the disciples "in the words God uses as his own formula of self-identification, 'I am,' . . . thus definitively answering the disciples' question in the previous story of trouble on the sea, 'Who then is this?'"<sup>232</sup>

### Calming the Wind

Jesus' divine identity is also manifest in the authority he exercises over the wind. As soon as Jesus ascends into the boat, the wind ceases (ἐκόπασεν ὁ ἄνεμος, 6:51; cf. ἐκόπασεν ὁ ἄνεμος, 4:39). Oddly enough, Lane reasons that "since the abatement of

---

<sup>229</sup> Collins, "Rulers," 227.

<sup>230</sup> Young, *Subversive Symmetry*, 130.

<sup>231</sup> Boring, *Mark*, 190; Young, *Subversive Symmetry*, 129–30.

<sup>232</sup> Boring, *Mark*, 190.

the wind may be ascribed to natural causes it is unnecessary to find here an additional demonstration of Jesus' sovereignty."<sup>233</sup> Presumably, Lane argues this on the grounds that Jesus never explicitly commands the wind as he did in ESC<sup>1</sup>, but surely the reader is not expected to treat the sequence of Jesus' entering the boat and the wind's immediate cessation as just an amazing coincidence. Donahue suggests that the lack of command implies that Mark's focus is "on the epiphany rather than on the wondrous act."<sup>234</sup> Though an improvement over Lane, Donahue's suggestion is still inadequate. Neither commentator seems to recognize the evocative power this second cessation of wind would have upon the implied reader, who would naturally invoke ESC<sup>1</sup>, which boasts the only other cessation of wind in Mark. By the time, the reader reaches ESC<sup>2</sup>, they have not only semantic frames but also a narrative frame at their disposal to help them discern the intended meaning of the wind's cessation in ESC<sup>2</sup>. As it was in ESC<sup>1</sup>, the cessation of the adverse wind is a sign of Jesus' divine authority over the demonic, and therefore epiphanic, just as it was in ESC<sup>1</sup>. In fact, the absence of a command may heighten its epiphanic import.<sup>235</sup>

Here again we have another principal carrier within the Sea Crossing motif, wherein demonic opposition, Gentile mission, and Jesus' identity are intertwined. The precise relationship between these three elements in the Markan narrative will receive further development as we work our way through The Loaves motif.

#### MARK 8:13–21, DISCUSSION ABOUT THE LOAVES — ESC<sup>3</sup>

	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
ἐμβαίνω	x								
ἀπέρχομαι	x								
πέραν	x								
πλοῖον		x							

**Figure 5–19: Members of the Sea Crossing Motif in Mark 8:13–21**

As was noted earlier, in this study ESC<sup>3</sup> is being treated as a principal carrier of the Sea Crossing motif in a qualified sense. ESC<sup>3</sup> not only features a fairly low number of cluster members, the ones it does feature are concentrated at the beginning of the

<sup>233</sup> Lane, *Mark*, 237.

<sup>234</sup> Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 214.

<sup>235</sup> Cf. Gundry, *Mark*, 342.

episode (Figure 5–19). In fact, all belong to the SEA CROSSING narrative grammar and so contribute nothing to the principal action and thematic thrust of the episode; nevertheless, they perform a significant rhetorical function. *These four members of the Sea Crossing motif draw ESC<sup>3</sup> and its discussion about loaves into the Sea Crossing motif, much in the same way that two members of The Loaves motif draw ESC<sup>2</sup> and its sea miracles into The Loaves motif*, as we shall see in the following chapter. In short, ESC<sup>3</sup> is a principal carrier of both motifs, though it contributes more to The Loaves than to the Sea Crossing motif. Consequently, ESC<sup>3</sup> receives a much more detailed analysis in Chapter Six; its treatment here is limited to the contributions it makes to the Sea Crossing motif.

### *The Goal*

First of all, the intended destination of ESC<sup>3</sup> is clearly Gentile space for they embark from Jewish Dalmanutha (8:10) and are headed *to the other side* of the sea (εἰς τὸ πέραν, 8:13). This Gentile trajectory is confirmed upon their arrival at Bethsaida (8:22). Given that the first two ESCs had mission as their objectives and given that, during his sojourn in Gentile lands (7:24–8:9), Jesus carried out his typical activities of exorcising, healing, teaching, and feeding, it stands to reason that the goal of this sea crossing is to engage in further Gentile mission. Again, confirmation comes via Jesus' healing of a blind man upon their arrival (8:22–26). It appears, then, that the final ESC has the same goal as the first two, Gentile mission.

### *Opposition*

In ESC<sup>1</sup>, the demonically-animated forces of wind and sea are presented as would-be obstacles to the successful completion of the voyage to the other side, yet they are easily overcome by Jesus with a word. Likewise, in ESC<sup>2</sup>, although the demonic forces allied against the disciples are able to thwart their progress, they are again easily overcome by Jesus who walks upon the sea and calms the adverse wind. Yet, these cosmic forces were not the only obstacle to the successful completion of ESC<sup>2</sup> and its promise of Gentile mission. Instead, I argued that the disciples themselves were opposed to Gentile mission, at least to their participation in that mission, and that the Markan Jesus does not exercise the same absolute authority over human agents as he does cosmic agents. Consequently, ESC<sup>2</sup> was aborted, along with its Gentile designs.



In ESC<sup>3</sup>, the wind and the sea do not even figure into the episode, which accounts for why ESC<sup>3</sup> exhibits so few members of the Sea Crossing motif associational cluster. On this occasion, then, there are no cosmic forces standing in the way of a successful crossing over into Gentile space. Instead, the sole opposition is the disciples, as Jesus' stern warnings and severe rebuke intimates. Through their "forgetting" to bring loaves with them in the boat (8:14), thereby hoping to thwart another Gentile feeding, the disciples once again serve as obstacles, if not to the successful completion of the voyage then at least, to the Gentile mission on the other side. Here, of course, I am drawing upon Gibson's thesis, which will be defended in the following chapter.

But, if this turns out to be true, then we have an interesting thematic progression within three ESCs. In ESC<sup>1</sup>, the opposition to Gentile mission is cosmic; in ESC<sup>2</sup>, it is both cosmic and human; and in ESC<sup>3</sup>, the opposition is solely human. This fits the pattern of a double, two-step progression, which is the same pattern I suggested for understanding the intrarelationship of the ESCs in Chapter Three, though on other grounds.

#### *The Identity of Jesus*

In ESC<sup>1</sup>, ESC<sup>2</sup>, and 5:1–20, the matter of Jesus' identity was a central component, but the same does not obtain in this final ESC. This difference relates to the fact that in each of the other episodes, Jesus' divine identity was manifest and recognized, at least by the reader, through his overcoming demonic opposition to Gentile mission. In ESC<sup>3</sup>, the opposition comes from the disciples, the same disciples who were unable to recognize who he was in ESC<sup>2</sup>. Perhaps, then, the rhetorical question with which Jesus concludes ESC<sup>3</sup>, οὐπω συνίετε; (8:21), much like disciples' question at the conclusion of ESC<sup>1</sup>, τίς ἄρα οὗτός ἐστιν; (4:41), somehow relates to Jesus' identity. This seems probable, given that in the episode after next, the Sea Crossing movement, and indeed the first half of the gospel, concludes with Peter's climactic recognition of Jesus' messianic identity.

### **CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE SEA CROSSING MOTIF**

As we have seen, the Sea Crossing motif contributes to the Markan narrative in a variety of ways, both formal and informal. Formally, the Sea Crossing motif provides the

underlying geographical structure for the Sea Crossing movement, within which the Gentile trajectory of the all of the ESCs, and only the three ESCs, is established. Informally, the Sea Crossing motif contributes to the characterization of Jesus and his disciples, especially as it relates to the matter of Gentile mission.

#### THE CHARACTERIZATION OF JESUS

In Mark, the Sea of Galilee symbolizes the demonic forces that oppose the vocational objectives of Jesus' kingdom mission. As a topographical feature that separates Jewish from Gentile space, the sea also represents the social, religious, ethnic, and cultural barriers that define and so distinguish Jews from Gentiles. More specifically, then, the Markan sea symbolizes the demonic forces that are opposed to Jewish mission to Gentiles. Yet, for all of its chaotic force and power, the sea presents no real obstacle for Jesus. With a word, Jesus can calm the sea, so securing safe passage to Gentile shores; even when it rages, Jesus can walk upon the sea as though he were walking upon dry land. Thus, through the agency of the Sea Crossing motif, Jesus is revealed as one who exercises divine prerogatives, as one who possesses divine authority over the demonic forces, which in turn provides justification for his inclusion of Gentiles within his proclamation and demonstration of the kingdom.

#### THE CHARACTERIZATION OF THE DISCIPLES

Through the Sea Crossing motif, the disciples are presented as those who are themselves an obstacle to the Gentile mission. Jesus calls and equips his disciples to become fishers of people, a vocation that is to be carried out both locally and abroad. They are quite successful when fishing in Jewish waters, but they are unable and/or unwilling to cast their nets in Gentile waters. In ESC<sup>2</sup>, Jesus must force his disciples to continue their work on the other side of the sea, yet they never arrive at their appointed Gentile destination. It is at this point in the narrative where the characterization of the Markan disciples takes its decidedly downward turn.

## CHAPTER SIX

# THE LOAVES MOTIF



The second motif to be analyzed is The Loaves motif, which is oriented around the recurrence of ἄρτος, especially its articular plural occurrences, thus the name, The Loaves motif. Its establishment confirms the presence of what commentators have identified as the Bread Section<sup>1</sup> or Bread Cycle,<sup>2</sup> generally Mark 6:7–8:21. Yet, while The Loaves motif is particularly prominent within the Bread Cycle, it is much more extensive in Mark, stretching from 2:23 to 14:25.

### ESTABLISHING THE LOAVES MOTIF

#### THE FREQUENCY AND AVOIDABILITY OF ΑΡΤΟΣ

##### THE FREQUENCY OF ΑΡΤΟΣ

In Mark, ἄρτος occurs 21 times within 10 episodes. Out of 1,319 lemmas in Mark, ἄρτος ranks 70th in terms of frequency,<sup>3</sup> locating it in the 94th percentile, making it one of the most frequently occurring words in the entire gospel. As a common noun, ἄρτος ranks 11th out of 437 (in the 97th percentile). Additionally, 18 of its 21 occurrences appear in Mark 4:1–8:30, making it the most frequently occurring noun within the Sea Crossing movement.

In terms of total number of occurrences within a biblical book, Mark's 21 occurrences place it in a tie for sixth place with Matthew's 21, behind Leviticus and 1

---

<sup>1</sup> Mark 6:7b–8:21 (Eugene A. LaVerdiere, *The Eucharist in the New Testament and in the Early Church* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1996), 51); Mark 6:8–8:21 (Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 47).

<sup>2</sup> Mark 6:30–8:21 (Svartvik, *Mark and Mission*, 295).

<sup>3</sup> In Matthew, Luke, and John, ἄρτος ranks 90th, 92nd, and 91st, respectively.

Samuel (each with 25); 1 Kings and John (each with 24); and Genesis (with 22). Yet, in terms of frequency of recurrence, Mark ranks 2nd; only the very short letter 2 Thessalonians, with its two occurrences of ἄρτος, ranks higher (Figure 6–1).

	Occurrences of ἄρτος	Total Number of Words in Book	Frequency of Recurrence
<b>2 Thessalonians</b>	2	823	2.43
<b>Mark</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>11,133</b>	<b>1.89</b>
<b>John</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>15,635</b>	<b>1.54</b>
Leviticus	25	19,082	1.31
1 Samuel	25	20,131	1.24
1 Kings	24	20,803	1.15
Matthew	<b>21</b>	<b>18,634</b>	<b>1.14</b>
2 Samuel	14	17,927	.78
Luke	<b>15</b>	<b>19,482</b>	<b>.77</b>
Exodus	18	24,816	.73
Sirach	13	18,424	.71
Genesis	22	32,566	.68
Ezekiel	19	29,658	.64
Isaiah	16	27,075	.59
Psalms	17	34,964	.49
Jeremiah	11	28,948	.38

Frequency of recurrence is the ratio of the total number of occurrences of a given word in a book to the total number of words within that book, and the ratio is given as the number of occurrences per thousand words (e.g., in 2 Thess ἄρτος occurs 2.43 times per thousand words on average. • Not included in this table are writings in which ἄρτος occurs less than ten times, except for 2 Thess, the only biblical book with a higher frequency of recurrence for ἄρτος than Mark. • For ease of comparison, the gospels have been **highlighted**.

**Figure 6–1: Frequency of Recurrence of ἄρτος in Biblical Literature**

This data reveals that the frequency of recurrence of ἄρτος in Mark is high in comparison with both its recurrence in other biblical writings and, more importantly, the recurrence of other words within the Markan narrative. This level of recurrence satisfies Freedman’s criterion of frequency, making ἄρτος a candidate for the foundation of a literary motif.

#### THE AVOIDABILITY OF ΑΡΤΟΣ

*Mark 6:8*

In Mark 6:8, the appearance of ἄρτος is striking. Jesus sends the Twelve out on an itinerant mission charging them “to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no

loaf (μὴ ἄρτον), no provision bag, no money in their belt.” Given that a person would typically take food, other provisions, and money on such a journey, these instructions are unexpected, and so it is not insignificant that ἄρτος heads the list of prohibited items. After all, in the Lukan account, ἄρτος occurs in the middle of the list (9:3) and is altogether absent in the instructions to the seventy (10:4). Likewise, in Matthew, ἄρτος is not explicitly prohibited (although Jesus’ statement that “laborers deserve their *food*” (τροφή, 10:10) implies that ἄρτος was not permitted). These contrasts to Mark offer additional support for the avoidability of ἄρτος in Mark 6:8.

#### Mark 6:52

Arguably the most distinctive occurrence of ἄρτος in Mark comes at the conclusion of ESC<sup>2</sup>. Here the narrator explains the disciples’ terror and astonishment (6:50–51)<sup>4</sup> with, “for they did not understand ἐπὶ τοῖς ἄρτοις but their heart was hardening” (6:52). This explanation is exceedingly enigmatic, as evidenced by the scholarly attention it has received.<sup>5</sup> Bassler observes, “The astonishment of the disciples at these events is easy to comprehend, but not the rationale provided.”<sup>6</sup>

First of all, the meaning of the explanation is unclear; the narrator “leaves completely unspecified *what* they had not understood about the breads. And 6,30–44 contained no hint that there was anything about the breads which required a special understanding.”<sup>7</sup> Clearly, τοῖς ἄρτοις alludes to the immediately preceding feeding, but what specifically does it refer to: the feeding as a whole, the loaves used to feed the crowd, the baskets of leftover fragments, or something else altogether? Yet, even if the referent were known, there would still be the question of what about the referent had not been understood, not to mention how this lack of understanding contributes to and explains the reactions of the disciples. “Mark gives the disciples [and

<sup>4</sup> Young notes the difficulty of stating definitively what events in the episode are the object of the disciples’ astonishment and thinks it best to take their astonishment “as a collective term for a multiplicity of events between vv. 49–51” (*Subversive Symmetry*, 134).

<sup>5</sup> Especially Jouette M. Bassler, “The Parable of the Loaves,” *JR* 66 (1986): 157–72; Henderson, “Concerning the Loaves,” 3–26; Quentin Quesnell, *The Mind of Mark: Interpretation and Method through the Exegesis of Mark 6,52* (AnBib 38; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969).

<sup>6</sup> Bassler, “Parable of the Loaves,” 163.

<sup>7</sup> Quesnell, *Mind*, 66.

the reader!] little hint as to what they should have understood, although this understanding is essential.”<sup>8</sup>

Beyond its inscrutability, the explanation is also highly improbable. Not even the most attentive reader would ever arrive at this explanation unaided for nothing in the story thus far would allow the implied reader, let alone a real reader, to interpret the disciples’ fear and astonishment in terms of their failure to understand about the loaves, which is why the explanation enters the narrative as a revelation in the form of reliable commentary from the narrator.<sup>9</sup> In fact, apart from narrator’s intrusion, there is nothing in ESC<sup>2</sup> that explicitly connects it with the feeding of the five thousand, be it verbal, thematic, let alone causal.

Ironically, though this revelation appears in the guise of an explanatory-*γάρ* clause, it conceals more than it reveals.<sup>10</sup> Consider the following observation by C. H. Bird:

It is a notorious characteristic of at least some of the *gar* clauses in Mark that *prima facie* either they can hardly be said to explain the preceding sentence or else they obscure rather than illuminate the immediate context by drawing attention to some factor which is an embarrassment rather than an aid to interpretation.<sup>11</sup>

Here the embarrassment stems from the fact that had the narrator not intruded, no problems would have obtained. The reader could have made complete and logical sense of the disciples’ terror and astonishment given that pretty astonishing and terrifying things had just occurred. Yet, the narrator spares the reader the luxury of the more obvious and natural explanation, offering in its stead an explanation that leaves the reader confused.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Willard M. Swartley, *Israel’s Scripture Traditions and the Synoptic Gospels: Story Shaping Story* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994), 59. The bracketed text is my own addition.

<sup>9</sup> For discussions, from a literary perspective (vs. a historical perspective) regarding reliable commentary in Mark and the reliability of the Markan narrator see, Beavis, *Mark’s Audience*, 177–80. Danove, *End*, 67–71, 174–76; Robert M. Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand: Reader-Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 61–126; idem, *Loaves and Fishes*, 149–79. On the other hand, see Young’s discussion regarding the unreliability of the Markan narrator, which specifically addresses 6:52. Though I remain unconvinced regarding his ultimate conclusion, Young’s argument makes some solid observations, raises important questions, and so warrants careful consideration (*Subversive Symmetry*, 146–160).

<sup>10</sup> In this respect, the narrator’s aside bears marked resemblance to Jesus’ parables in Mark.

<sup>11</sup> C. H. Bird, “Some *γάρ* Clauses in St. Mark’s Gospel,” *JTS* 4 (1953): 173.

<sup>12</sup> “Thus 6:52 actually does nothing to explain the disciples’ fear and amazement. If anything it complicates the explanation provided by the story itself, and thus only creates a further problem” (Quesnell, *Mind*, 66).

Finally, it is the reference to τοῖς ἄρτοις that creates the problem. Most likely, the reader could have understood the narrator's attributing the disciples' terror and astonishment to a lack of understanding and/or hardness of heart for, by this point in the narrative, Jesus has already performed a spectrum of amazing deeds. Thus, the disciples might be expected to react differently, especially with respect to the cessation of the wind (6:51), which is something they had previously witnessed (6:39). But, as Quesnell observes:

It does not follow that one who had seen the miracle of the loaves would not have been or ought not to have been surprised to see Jesus walk on the water. Jesus had never walked on the water before. Should they also not have been surprised if he went sailing off through the air?<sup>13</sup>

So, it is the reference to τοῖς ἄρτοις that generates problems for the reader and so points to the avoidability of ἄρτος in 6:52; its absence from the Matthean parallel lends support to this assessment.

Mark 7:2, 5

Mark 7:1–23 comprises a single, triadically composed episode, wherein Jesus debates with religious opponents (7:1–13), addresses a crowd with a parable (7:14–15), and then privately explains it to his disciples (7:17–23). The episode opens with scribes and Pharisees who gather around Jesus, and upon seeing that some of his disciples with unclean hands are eating *the loaves* (τοὺς ἄρτους, 7:2), ask him why his disciples with unclean hands are eating *the loaf* (τὸν ἄρτον, 7:5). Here we encounter a species of Markan repetition wherein an action or scene is introduced via exposition only to be followed, immediately or soon thereafter, with a recapitulation of the exposition's details via direct discourse, with (near) verbal and structural exactitude (Figure 6–2).<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Quesnell, *Mind*, 63–64.

<sup>14</sup> Neirynck, *Duality*, 114–15. The closest parallels are found in 2:13–17 and 2:18–22.

2:16a	καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς τῶν Φαρισαίων ἰδόντες	
2:16c	ἔλεγον τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ·	
2:16b	ὅτι ἐσθίει μετὰ τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν καὶ τελωνῶν	
2:16d	ὅτι μετὰ τῶν τελωνῶν καὶ ἁμαρτωλῶν ἐσθίει·	
2:18a	καὶ ἦσαν οἱ μαθηταὶ Ἰωάννου καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι νηστεύοντες.	
2:18c	διὰ τί οἱ μαθηταὶ Ἰωάννου καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ τῶν Φαρισαίων νηστεύουσιν.	
2:18b	καὶ ἔρχονται καὶ λέγουσιν αὐτῷ·	
2:18d	οἱ δὲ σοὶ μαθηταὶ οὐ νηστεύουσιν;	

7:1	καὶ συνάγονται πρὸς <u>αὐτὸν οἱ Φαρισαῖοι καὶ</u> <u>τινες τῶν γραμματέων</u> . . .
7:5a	καὶ ἐπερωτῶσιν <u>αὐτὸν οἱ Φαρισαῖοι καὶ</u> <u>οἱ γραμματεῖς</u> ·
7:2a	καὶ ἰδόντες <u>τινάς τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ</u>
7:5b	διὰ τί οὐ περιπατοῦσιν <u>οἱ μαθηταί σου</u> κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων,
7:2b	ὅτι <u>κοινᾶς γεροῖν</u> , τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἀνίπτοις, <u>ἐσθίουσιν τοὺς ἄρτους</u>
7:5c	ἀλλὰ <u>κοινᾶς γεροῖν</u> <u>ἐσθίουσιν τὸν ἄρτον</u> ;

**Figure 6–2: Horizontal-Line Synopsis of Mark 7:1–2 and 7:5**

The synopsis shows that ἄρτος receives prominence via end-of-sentence emphasis (contrast Matt 15:2) and via “repetition with variation”<sup>15</sup> (τοὺς ἄρτους becomes τὸν ἄρτον), which are rhetorical strategies the author uses to draw attention to features within the narrative that are key to its interpretation. Commentators often note the awkwardness,<sup>16</sup> unexpectedness,<sup>17</sup> or unintelligibility<sup>18</sup> of ἐσθίουσιν τοὺς ἄρτους in 7:2, which, we shall see, is due to a disconnect between the semantics of the phrase and the semantics of the context. The awkwardness is generally attributed to ἄρτους’ being plural,<sup>19</sup> sometimes to its being plural and articular.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, ἐσθίουσιν τὸν ἄρτον in 7:5 is rarely even mentioned, implying that it is regarded as grammatically acceptable. Booth is the rare exception in that he discusses τὸν ἄρτον in 7:5 in some detail. He highlights the ambiguity of τὸν ἄρτον, noting that it can denote either food or bread, ultimately concluding that it denotes food and so is “correctly expressed,” in contrast to τοὺς ἄρτους in 7:2 which is not.<sup>21</sup> Yet, by and large, these phrases are passed over without comment,<sup>22</sup> with most commentators treating them simply as idioms for eating. Consequently, in the following study, I attempt to establish a linguistic foundation for determining whether either or both phrases are awkward as some have suggested, and if so, how their awkwardness contributes to the avoidability of ἄρτος.

<sup>15</sup> David M. Rhoads, “Jesus and the Syrophoenician Woman in Mark: A Narrative-Critical Study,” *JAAR* 62 (1994): 351.

<sup>16</sup> Marcus, *Mark* 1–8, 440.

<sup>17</sup> France, *Mark*, 281.

<sup>18</sup> Quesnell, *Mind*, 100.

<sup>19</sup> France, *Mark*, 281; Marcus, *Mark* 1–8, 440; Implied in Roger P. Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity: Tradition History and Legal History in Mark 7* (JSNTSup 13; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 35, 121–22; Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 219; Quesnell, *Mind*, 100.

<sup>20</sup> Lohmeyer, *Markus*, 139n1; Quesnell, *Mind*, 100, 221; Guelich, *Mark*, 363.

<sup>21</sup> Booth, *Laws of Purity*, 35, 121–22; Oddly, Guelich does not discuss τὸν ἄρτον even after commenting upon the awkwardness of τοὺς ἄρτους in 7:2, which would also apply to τὸν ἄρτον: “the normal singular ἄρτον without the article meaning ‘to eat food’ (*Mark*, 363).

<sup>22</sup> The notable exceptions are Booth, *Laws of Purity*, 35, 121–22; Gundry, *Mark*, 348, 357–58; Quesnell, *Mind*, 100, 221–229.



### The ἐσθίω-ἄρτον/Pat Construction

The construction, ἐσθίω-ἄρτον/Pat, occurs when ἄρτος, as an accusative object complement, instantiates the required Patient argument of ἐσθίω, which is the construction that obtains in 7:2 and 7:5. The following study examines every occurrence of ἐσθίω-ἄρτον/Pat in biblical literature, attempting to determine what relationship(s) obtain between its syntax and semantics. We begin with a few preliminary observations.

(1) Ἐσθίω is a two-place predicator requiring Agent and Patient arguments, that is, someone (Agt) eating something (Pat). The Patient argument does not require lexical instantiation but is permissibly absent, as either a definite or an indefinite null complement.<sup>23</sup> Thus, in Koine (as in English), the following sentences are grammatically meaningful even though the Patient is not specified: ἐσθίει μετὰ τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν καὶ τελωνῶν, or even just, ἐσθίει. (2) Independent of its association with ἐσθίω, ἄρτος carries two basic meanings; it denotes “a baked product produced from a cereal grain” and so translated as *bread* or *loaf of bread*, or “any kind of food or nourishment” and so translated as *food*.<sup>24</sup> Thus, ἄρτος can mean either *food* in general or *bread* in particular. (3) Finally, the expression ἐσθίειν ἄρτον can mean literally, *to eat (a loaf of) bread*, but is more commonly an idiom meaning simply, *to eat (a meal)*.<sup>25</sup> When used idiomatically, then, there is no difference in meaning between ἐσθίειν ἄρτον and ἐσθίειν; both mean simply *to eat* (cf. Mark 3:20 and 6:31). In other words, when ἐσθίειν ἄρτον occurs, bread may or may not be the Patient being consumed. Given these considerations, the ensuing study seeks to determine the conditions under which ἐσθίω-ἄρτον/Pat denotes the consumption of *food* in general and (a loaf of) *bread* in particular.

First, 72 occurrences of ἐσθίω-ἄρτον/Pat in the LXX and NT were identified (LXX=57; NT=15). Second, a database was developed in which three categories of syntactical data related to ἄρτος were highlighted: grammatical number (singular or plural); articulation (anarthrous or articular); and grammatical modification (from no modification, i.e., absolute, to various types of modification, i.e., modification by a genitive noun or personal pronoun, a demonstrative pronoun, or a prepositional phrase). Third, each context in which ἐσθίω-ἄρτον/Pat occurred was considered and

---

<sup>23</sup> Danove, *Linguistics*, 51.

<sup>24</sup> BDAG, “ἄρτος,” 136.

<sup>25</sup> BDAG, “ἐσθίω,” 396.

a judgment made as to whether the construction intended to denote food in general or (a loaf of) bread in particular. Finally, this syntactic and semantic data was organized into a table (Figure 6–3).

	#	Articulation	Modification	Semantics	LXX	NT	×
1	Sg.	Anarthrous	— Absolute	general	36	6	42
2	Sg.	Articular	— Qualified by a Genitive Personal Pronoun	general	7	—	7
3	Sg.	Anarthrous	— Qualified by a Genitive Noun	general	6	—	6
4	Sg.	Anarthrous	— Qualified by a Genitive Personal Pronoun	general	2	—	2
5	Pl.	Anarthrous	— Absolute	general	2	—	2
6	Pl.	Anarthrous	— Qualified by a Genitive Personal Pronoun	general	1	—	1
7	Pl.	Articular	— Qualified by a Genitive Personal Pronoun	general	1	—	1
8	Sg.	Articular	— Absolute ( <i>≈ Mark 7:5</i> )	particular	—	3	3
9	Pl.	Articular	— Qualified by a Genitive Noun	particular	—	3	3
10	Pl.	Articular	— Qualified by a Prepositional Phrase	particular	2	—	2
11	Pl.	Articular	— Absolute ( <i>≈ Mark 7:2</i> )	particular	—	2	2
12	Sg.	Articular	— Qualified by a Demonstrative Pronoun	particular	—	1	1
					57	15	72

(1) Gen 37:25; Exod 2:20; 34:28; Lev 23:14; Deut 9:9, 18 (// Exod 34:28); 29:5; 1 Sam 2:36; 14:24, 28; 20:34; 28:20; 2 Sam 9:7, 10; 12:21; 1 Kgs 13:8, 9, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22ab, 23; 20:4, 5, 7; 2 Kgs 4:8; 25:29; Ezra 10:6; Ps 101:10; Jer 48:1; 52:33; Ezek 4:16; 44:3; Matt 15:2; Mark 3:20; Luke 7:33; 14:1, 15; 2 Thess 3:8. (2) Gen 3:19; Lev 26:5; Deut 8:9; Ps 101:5; Isa 4:1; Ezek 12:18; Tob 2:5 (cf. John 13:18). (3) 1 Kgs 22:27 // 2 Chr 18:26; Ps 77:25; Ezek 24:17, 22; Dan 10:3. (4) Eccl 9:7; Song 5:1. (5) Gen 43:16; Exod 16:3. (6) Ps 40:10. (7) Ezek 12:19. (8) Mark 6:44; 7:2. (9) Mark 2:26 // Matt 12:4 // Luke 6:4. (10) Exod 29:32 // Lev 8:31. (11) Mark 7:5; John 6:23; 1 Cor 11:27. (12) 1 Cor 11:26. (Markan references are underlined for convenience).

**Figure 6–3: The εσθίω-ἄρτον/Pat Construction — Database**

For the purpose of analysis, three additional tables were generated by sorting the data according to each of three categories of syntactical information (i.e., number, articulation, and modification). In order to evaluate the supposed awkwardness of Mark 7:2 and 7:5, they were temporarily set aside. The tables were then analyzed to see if any patterns emerged regarding the relationship between the syntax and semantics of εσθίω-ἄρτον/Pat. What follows is a digest of key observations.

First, sorting according grammatical number does not reveal any patterns (Figure 6–4). When ἄρτος occurs in the singular it can denote either food in general or bread in particular; the same holds true for ἄρτοι in the plural. Thus, as regards εσθίω-ἄρτον/Pat, grammatical number does not carry any semantic weight.

#	Articulation	Modification	Semantics	LXX	NT	×
Sg.	Anarthrous	— Absolute	general	36	6	42
Sg.	Anarthrous	— Qualified by a Genitive Noun	general	6	—	6
Sg.	Anarthrous	— Qualified by a Genitive Personal Pronoun	general	2	—	2
Sg.	Articular	— Absolute ( <i>≈ Mark 7:5</i> )	particular	—	2	2
Sg.	Articular	— Qualified by a Demonstrative Pronoun	particular	—	1	1
Sg.	Articular	— Qualified by a Genitive Personal Pronoun	general	7	—	7
Pl.	Anarthrous	— Absolute	general	2	—	2
Pl.	Anarthrous	— Qualified by a Genitive Personal Pronoun	general	1	—	1
Pl.	Articular	— Absolute ( <i>≈ Mark 7:2</i> )	particular	—	1	1
Pl.	Articular	— Qualified by a Genitive Noun	particular	—	3	3
Pl.	Articular	— Qualified by a Prepositional Phrase	particular	2	—	2
Pl.	Articular	— Qualified by a Genitive Personal Pronoun	general	1	—	1
				57	13	70

**Figure 6–4: The εσθιω-αρον/Pat Construction — Sorted by Grammatical Number**

Second, sorting according to articulation reveals two patterns (Figure 6–5). When ἄρτος is anarthrous, it *always* denotes food in general. When ἄρτος is articular, it denotes bread in particular, *except* when modified by a genitive personal pronoun (see below), in which case, it denotes food in general.

#	Articulation	Modification	Semantics	LXX	NT	×
Sg.	Anarthrous	— Absolute	general	36	6	42
Sg.	Anarthrous	— Qualified by a Genitive Noun	general	6	—	6
Sg.	Anarthrous	— Qualified by a Genitive Personal Pronoun	general	2	—	2
Pl.	Anarthrous	— Absolute	general	2	—	2
Pl.	Anarthrous	— Qualified by a Genitive Personal Pronoun	general	1	—	1
Sg.	Articular	— Absolute ( <i>≈ Mark 7:5</i> )	particular	—	2	2
Sg.	Articular	— Qualified by a Demonstrative Pronoun	particular	—	1	1
Sg.	Articular	— Qualified by a Genitive Personal Pronoun	general	7	—	7
Pl.	Articular	— Absolute ( <i>≈ Mark 7:2</i> )	particular	—	1	1
Pl.	Articular	— Qualified by a Genitive Noun	particular	—	3	3
Pl.	Articular	— Qualified by a Prepositional Phrase	particular	2	—	2
Pl.	Articular	— Qualified by a Genitive Personal Pronoun	general	1	—	1
				57	13	70

**Figure 6–5: The εσθιω-αρον/Pat Construction — Sorted by Articulation**

Third, sorting according to grammatical modification reveals one final pattern (Figure 6–6). When ἄρτος is modified by a genitive personal pronoun, it *always* carries the meaning of food in general, irrespective of grammatical number or articulation.

#	Articulation	Modification	Semantics	LXX	NT	×
Sg.	Anarthrous	— Absolute	general	36	6	42
Sg.	Articular	— Absolute (≈ Mark 7:5)	particular	—	2	2
Pl.	Anarthrous	— Absolute	general	2	—	2
Pl.	Articular	— Absolute (≈ Mark 7:2)	particular	—	1	1
Sg.	Articular	— Qualified by a Demonstrative Pronoun	particular	—	1	1
Pl.	Articular	— Qualified by a Prepositional Phrase	particular	2	—	2
Sg.	Anarthrous	— Qualified by a Genitive Noun	general	6	—	6
Pl.	Articular	— Qualified by a Genitive Noun	particular	—	3	3
Sg.	Anarthrous	— Qualified by a Genitive Personal Pronoun	general	2	—	2
Sg.	Articular	— Qualified by a Genitive Personal Pronoun	general	7	—	7
Pl.	Anarthrous	— Qualified by a Genitive Personal Pronoun	general	1	—	1
Pl.	Articular	— Qualified by a Genitive Personal Pronoun	general	1	—	1
				57	13	70

**Figure 6–6: The ἐσθίω-ἄρτον/Pat Construction — Sorted by Modification**

This brief study reveals that grammatical number is not a decisive factor in the semantics of ἐσθίω-ἄρτον/Pat. Instead, articulation, modification, and sometimes a combination of the two are the decisive factors for determining whether ἄρτος carries a general or particular meaning. In short, the semantics of ἐσθίω-ἄρτον/Pat in biblical literature can be summarized in two points: (1) When anarthrous and/or modified by a genitive personal pronoun, ἄρτος always carries the general meaning of *food*. (2) When articular, ἄρτος always carries the particular meaning of *(a loaf of) bread* except when modified by a genitive personal pronoun, in which case food is intended.

N.B. These observations are particular to ἐσθίω-ἄρτον/Pat and do not necessarily obtain when ἄρτος instantiates the Patient of another verb. Thus, when Booth concludes that in 7:5 τὸν ἄρτον denotes food (not bread), which is based upon examples where an articular and singular ἄρτος denotes food (e.g., Mark 7:27; Matt 6:11),<sup>26</sup> his conclusion must be rejected because he does not take into account the particular verb involved, which may exhibit a different set of syntactic-semantic relationships for ἄρτος.

Given these conclusions, it becomes clear that the expressions, ἐσθίουσιν τοὺς ἄρτους (7:2) and ἐσθίουσιν τὸν ἄρτον (7:5), are both awkward and unexpected in their respective contexts, stemming from the fact that their syntax does not fit the semantics evoked by the context. In 7:2, ἄρτος is articular plural and, in 7:5, ἄρτος is

<sup>26</sup> Booth, *Laws of Purity*, 121–22.

articular singular, and neither is qualified by a genitive personal pronoun. Given their syntactical patterns, the Koine reader would expect ἄρτος to denote *bread* in both cases. Yet, from the narrative context, the reader expects ἄρτος to denote *food* since the objection of the Pharisees and scribes does not have to do with the disciples eating (*a loaf or loaves of*) *bread* with unclean hands but rather their eating *food* with unclean hands.

Support for this understanding of the context can be found throughout the episode. In the explanatory-γάρ clause, inserted between 7:2 and 7:5, ἐσθίω occurs twice without its Patient being lexically realized (an instance of an INC) and so denotes food in general. Also, Jesus' teaching about what does and does not defile a person is not particular to the eating of bread, as confirmed by the narrator's interpretive declaration, καθαρίζων πάντα τὰ βρώματα, which speaks of all foods, not bread specifically (7:19). Finally, while Booth notes that "there is late evidence that bread occupied a special position in relation to handwashing,"<sup>27</sup> his study of the tradition and legal histories behind Mark 7 shows that the Pharisees' objection addresses the manner in which one eats food in general, not bread in particular. Thus, commentators who have judged ἐσθίουσιν τοὺς ἄρτους in 7:2 to be awkward are justified, although their judgment should be extended to include ἐσθίουσιν τὸν ἄρτον in 7:5 as well, for the awkwardness lies not in ἄρτος's being plural, as is often asserted, but in its being articular.<sup>28</sup>

Consequently, Mark 7:2 and 7:5 are the only two instances out of the seventy-two occurrences of ἐσθίω-ἄρτον/Pat in biblical literature where the syntax of the construction and the semantics of the context do not correspond.<sup>29</sup> This contrasts with the other three occurrences of ἐσθίω-ἄρτον/Pat in Mark that do conform to the expected patterns (2:26; 3:20; 6:44), and so points to the avoidability of ἄρτος in both 7:2 and 7:5.

Additional support for this conclusion can once again be found in Matthew, which avoids these two Markan idiosyncrasies. First, in characteristic fashion, Mat-

<sup>27</sup> "In discussion [sic] between R. Shimi b. Ashi and R. Nahman . . . , it is agreed that rinsing of the hands is required before eating bread but not before fruit (Hagigah 18b)" (Booth, *Laws of Purity*, 122).

<sup>28</sup> So Guelich, *Mark*, 363; Lohmeyer, *Markus*, 139; Quesnell, *Mind*, 221.

<sup>29</sup> Since the initial study was undertaken, I have discovered that the ἐσθίω-ἄρτος/Pat construction does not occur in Josephus or the Apostolic Fathers and only once in Philo, in a quotation of Genesis 3:19, which was included in the original study (*Alleg. Interp.* 3:251), where it follows the pattern previously identified in the biblical literature, i.e., plural articular qualified by a genitive personal pronoun with a general meaning.

thew eradicates a repetition in Mark by eliminating the introductory exposition in 7:2, along with its reference to ἐσθίουσιν τοὺς ἄρτους (cf. Matt 15:1).<sup>30</sup> Second, in the direct discourse that Matthew retains, Mark's ἐσθίουσιν τὸν ἄρτον has been transformed into ἄρτον ἐσθίουσιν through the removal of the offending article (Matt 15:2). Yet, these modifications have no discernible effect on the story level of the narrative; the thoughts, actions, and speech of the characters in Matthew's episode are the same as those in Mark's episode. This provides a perfect illustration of how two narratives can have essentially the same story yet radically different discourses. It further serves to highlight the fact that in Mark 7:2 and 7:5, τοὺς ἄρτους and τὸν ἄρτον carry out a primarily (exclusively?) rhetorical function and thus are avoidable. If so, then, how is the discrepancy between the syntax and semantics of ἐσθίω-ἄρτον/Pat in 7:2 and 7:5 to be explained?

As regards 7:2, most who comment on ἐσθίουσιν τοὺς ἄρτους see an allusion to previous references to *the loaves*.<sup>31</sup> The Jewish feeding contains multiple references to loaves, including a closing reference to those who ate τοὺς ἄρτους (6:44). Similarly, ESC<sup>2</sup> contains a closing reference to the disciples not understanding about τοῖς ἄρτοις (6:52). Then, following a brief summary of healings performed in the market places (6:56; cf. 7:4), a new episode is introduced with reference to the disciples eating τοὺς ἄρτους (7:2). This recurrence of *the loaves* in three quite different, nearly sequential episodes is a rhetorical strategy designed to interconnect these episodes. When a reader (and especially an auditor), who has had little time to reflect upon what it means for the disciples not to understand about τοῖς ἄρτοις (6:52), hears that the disciples are eating τοὺς ἄρτους (7:2), it is highly likely that the ensuing episode has some direct bearing upon this unresolved issue. Thus, τοὺς ἄρτους functions rhetorically through echoes to establish connections between 7:1–23 and 6:45–52 and 6:33–44.

For Gundry, however, no discrepancy exists because the article is anaphoric; ἐσθίουσιν τοὺς ἄρτους is merely a description of the disciples eating the five loaves become twelve baskets of fragments and “indicates that some of the disciples have finally found opportunity to eat (contrast 6:31).”<sup>32</sup> Moreover, Gundry sees no connec-

---

<sup>30</sup> Matthew employs this same strategy in 9:11 and 9:14 to dissolve the exposition-discourse duality of Mark 2:16 and 2:18 (see fn 14).

<sup>31</sup> The rare exception is France, *Mark*, 281.

<sup>32</sup> Gundry, *Mark*, 348–49.

tion between *the loaves* in 7:2 and 6:52, yet from the perspective of narrative criticism, this last point is indefensible. In 7:2, the reference to the disciples eating the loaves comes just five verses after the inexplicable reference to the disciples not understanding about the loaves in 6:52, making it difficult for anyone to maintain that real readers would not make a connection between these episodes, let alone maintain that the implied reader is not expected to make such a connection. As for the disciples eating the leftovers from the five loaves, this idea is certainly worth considering. The advantage of such a reading is that it would remove any awkwardness in 7:2 while still leaving open the possibility of a rhetorical link between 7:1–23 and 6:45–52 and 6:33–44.

Yet, here, Gundry’s argument runs aground through its inability to give a satisfactory account for the singular, τὸν ἄρτον, in 7:5. He argues for an anarthrous singular in the underlying tradition, with the anarthrous singular being duplicated and made articular plural “to indicate that the disciples are eating the leftovers of the earlier loaves”<sup>33</sup> (7:2), though he neglects to explore why Mark did this. In 7:5, Mark added an anaphoric article to the underlying anarthrous singular that points back to the bread mentioned in 7:2, yet he never explains why Mark did not pluralize it to match 7:2. Given the purported modifications Mark has already made to ἄρτον in 7:2 and 5, surely we are not to believe that he has chosen to preserve a vestige of the underlying tradition by keeping ἄρτον singular in 7:5.<sup>34</sup> After all, we are not dealing with a dominical saying but a question posed by opponents. In the end, Gundry’s argument wants for lack of consistency.

Gundry’s argument does, however, reveal a problem that so far remains without solution; namely, why is τὸν ἄρτον in 7:5 singular? As far as I have discovered, this question has never been asked probably because few commentators even recognize its awkwardness.<sup>35</sup> Yet, its awkwardness is not what principally gives voice to this question but the fact that the clause to which it belongs, κοινᾶς χειρὶν ἐσθίουσιν τὸν ἄρτον (7:5c) occurs in parallel to, κοινᾶς χειρὶν, τοῦτ’ ἔστιν ἀνίπτοις, ἐσθίουσιν τοὺς ἄρτους (7:2b), where the only notable difference is the grammatical number

---

<sup>33</sup> Gundry, *Mark*, 348.

<sup>34</sup> Gundry does not explicitly make this claim, but the overall logic of his argument seems to presuppose it; in fact, without it his argument would be unintelligible.

<sup>35</sup> Booth, *Laws of Purity*, 121–22; Quesnell, *Mark*, 221.

of ἄρτος (Figure 6–7),<sup>36</sup> a difference that stands out precisely because of the verbal exactitude of the other paralleled words.

<b>7:1</b>	καὶ συνάγονται πρὸς αὐτὸν οἱ Φαρισαῖοι καὶ τινες τῶν γραμματέων . . .
<b>7:5a</b>	καὶ ἐπερωτῶσιν αὐτὸν οἱ Φαρισαῖοι καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς·
<b>7:2a</b>	καὶ ἰδόντες τινὰς τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ
<b>7:5b</b>	διὰ τί οὐ περιπατοῦσιν οἱ μαθηταί σου κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων,
<b>7:2b</b>	ὅτι κοιναῖς χερσίν, τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἀνίπτοις, ἐσθίουσιν τοὺς ἄρτους
<b>7:5c</b>	ἀλλὰ κοιναῖς χερσίν ἐσθίουσιν τὸν ἄρτον;

**Figure 6–7: Horizontal-Line Synopsis of Mark 7:1–2 and 7:5**

In 7:5b, the addition of περιπατοῦσιν . . . κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων gives the impression that the relationship between 7:1–2 and 7:5 is that of a two-step progression, which may imply that the question we should be asking is not so much, “Why is τὸν ἄρτον singular?,” but, “Why the shift from the plural, τοὺς ἄρτους, to the singular, τὸν ἄρτον?”

One possibility is that the shift has some connection with the introduction to ESC<sup>3</sup> where the initial reference to the disciples neglecting to bring *loaves* (ἄρτους) is immediately qualified with reference to the *one loaf* (ἓνα ἄρτον) they do have (8:14), though what the significance of this connection might be is difficult to determine. An even more intriguing and defensible possibility is that τὸν ἄρτον in 7:5 performs the same rhetorical function that τοὺς ἄρτους performs in 7:2. That is, my basic argument has been that ἐσθίουσιν τοὺς ἄρτους denotes loaves of bread in particular which contrasts with the context that has in view food in general. By referring to *the loaves*, the author is not indicating that the disciples are consuming the leftovers from the feeding of the five thousand (*contra* Gundry) but is making a narrative allusion by means of a *Stichwort* so that the reader will associate Jesus’ purity debate with the Pharisees (7:1–23) with the disciples not understanding about the loaves (6:45–52) and the Jewish feeding (6:33–44). In narrative-critical terms, different things are occurring on the story and discourse levels. In the story, the disciples are eating food with unclean hands, which sparks a debate over ritual purity; in the discourse, the author is guiding the reader to make connections with previous episodes via reference to *the loaves*.

<sup>36</sup> The non-repetition of the explanatory, τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἀνίπτοις, is considered to be insignificant.



Given the verbal and structural parallels between 7:2b and 7:5c, I would suggest that the same story-versus-discourse dynamic is at work in 7:5. Thus, on the story level, τὸν ἄρτον is synonymous with τοὺς ἄρτους in depicting the disciples eating food, while on the discourse level, τὸν ἄρτον parallels the rhetorical function of τοὺς ἄρτους, creating an allusion between 7:1–23 and one or more other episodes. If τοὺς ἄρτους alludes to other articular plurals of ἄρτος, then one would naturally expect τὸν ἄρτον to allude to other articular singulars of ἄρτος. It just so happens that there is only one other articular singular of ἄρτος in Mark, and it occurs in the very next episode in Jesus' response to the Syrophoenician woman's request for healing for her daughter, "Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not right to take *the loaf* (τὸν ἄρτον) of the children and throw it to the dogs (7:27). Such close proximity of the only two articular singular occurrences of ἄρτος in Mark adds credence to this proposal. Additional support for this proposal and its implications will come later when the connections between 7:24–30 and 6:33–44 and 6:45–52 are explored in detail. For now, it is sufficient to note that this proposal has many advantages in that it treats 7:2 and 7:5 in a consistent manner, provides a rationale for the awkwardness of ἐσθίουσιν τὸν ἄρτον, and accounts for the shift from τοὺς ἄρτους to τὸν ἄρτον.

#### *Mark 7:27*

In the next episode, Jesus withdraws to Tyre where he is encountered by a Gentile woman seeking healing for her demon-possessed daughter (7:24–30). This episode exhibits a number of salient features, not least being Jesus' uncharacteristic reply, which suggests an unwillingness or even a flat-out refusal to accede to the request. Of interest here is that Jesus responds to the request with a parable in which ἄρτος is featured. In fact, Jesus' challenge and the woman's counter-challenge employ language evocative of both feeding narratives (ἄρτος, λαμβάνω, χορτάζω, ψιχίων). But what does ἄρτος and the feeding narratives have to do with exorcising demons? Perhaps this is not an obvious or necessary question, given that parables, like analogies, are able to draw similarities between two subjects that are otherwise dissimilar. Yet, when one considers the fact that this is the fifth episode out of the last six in which ἄρτος appears, including a number of avoidable occurrences (6:8, 52; 7:2, 5) and at least one occurrence that does not have any obvious connection with its context (6:52), then perhaps we are justified in saying that "the 'bread' saying seems uncon-

nected with the request.”<sup>37</sup> Lacking any obvious connection to the story world of the episode increases the likelihood that ἄρτος is primarily performing a rhetorical function and so is avoidable.

#### Mark 8:14

At the outset of the final sea crossing, the reader is informed that the disciples “had neglected to bring [any] loaves (ἄρτους),” and that “except for one loaf (εἰ μὴ ἓνα ἄρτον) they did not have [any loaves] with them in the boat” (8:14). The reference to ἓνα ἄρτον is exceedingly curious for it plays no role in the story itself, and in this respect is reminiscent of the reference to *the other boats* in the first sea crossing (4:36). When Jesus issues the leaven warning, the disciples respond with, “we do not have [any] loaves” (8:16), not with, “we only have *one loaf*.” Likewise, Jesus asks them, “Why are you discussing that you do not have [any] loaves?” (8:17). In 8:16–17, loaves recalls 14a and *having* 14c, yet neither party mentions the *one loaf* from 14b; this despite its being highlighted through a “not . . . except” construction, where special emphasis usually falls upon the excepted thing<sup>38</sup> and where, on this occasion, it receives additional emphasis because the exception clause occurs prior to the main clause, instead of after, which is the more usual.<sup>39</sup> In the end, if the reference to the one loaf were discarded, nothing any of the characters think, say, or do would be affected. Only the reader would be affected by its absence for the one loaf serves to emphasize the disciples’ failure to bring several loaves, thus contributing to their negative characterization. This suggests that εἰ μὴ ἓνα ἄρτον performs a purely rhetorical function, and so is avoidable. In support of this conclusion is Matthew’s parallel where reference to the one loaf has not been retained without any discernible effect on the story level of the episode (Matt 16:5).

#### Prominence of “the Loaves”

One final argument that demonstrates the avoidability of ἄρτος concerns the prominence of οἱ ἄρτοι in the feeding narratives. While in both feedings the multitudes are provided both loaves and fish, the loaves receive the greater attention. They are

<sup>37</sup> Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 233.

<sup>38</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 506.

<sup>39</sup> In Mark, the negative plus εἰ μὴ construction occurs ten times (2:26; 5:37; 6:4, 5, 8; 8:14; 9:9; 10:18; 11:13; 13:32), yet only in 8:14 does it precede the independent clause.

mentioned more often than the fish (F5000 = 7 to 4; F4000 = 4 to 1),<sup>40</sup> are more numerous than the fish (F5000 = 5 vs. 2; F4000 = 7 vs. a few), and are always mentioned first. While references to the fish always parallel references to the loaves, the loaves may be mentioned independently of the fish.<sup>41</sup> For example, when the issue of feeding the crowds arises, the disciples question the possibility of buying enough loaves (6:37) or feeding with loaves (8:4); in neither instance do they mention fish. Likewise, when Jesus inquires into the available supplies, he asks the disciples about how many loaves they have but not about how many fish (6:38; 8:5). To be sure there is some parity in the treatment of the loaves and the fish in the first feeding. The disciples have both loaves and fish (6:38); Jesus takes and blesses both (6:39a); the dividing of the fish among everyone parallels the breaking of the loaves to be placed before the crowd (6:41); and the remains of both are gathered into baskets (6:43). Still this parity is not sustained for at the end of the episode only the loaves are mentioned (6:44).<sup>42</sup> Moreover, this parity is all but absent in the second feeding, where the disciples only mention having loaves and where Jesus performs the actions of taking, thanking, breaking, and giving on the loaves alone (8:5–6). Only then, in what strikes many commentators as something of an afterthought or a clumsy insertion,<sup>43</sup> is the reader informed that there also happen to be a few fish, which are summarily blessed and distributed (8:7). Moreover, whenever the feedings are recalled in Mark, *the loaves* alone is employed; so, the disciples do not to understand about *the loaves* (6:52), and with unclean hands they eat *the loaves* (7:2). Likewise, when Jesus recalls the two feedings in ESC<sup>3</sup>, he does so with sole reference to the loaves: “When I broke *the five loaves* . . . and *the seven [loaves]* . . . (8:19–20). Thus, the prominence of the loaves on these occasions fits nicely with the emerging portrait of the rhetorical function and thus avoidability of ἄρτος in Mark.

---

<sup>40</sup> Actually, ἄρτος only explicitly occurs five times in the F5000, but it is implied in the disciples’ response to Jesus’ question about the number of loaves they have, πέντε καὶ δύο ἰχθύας (6:38), and in 6:43 where κλάσματα refers specifically to the leftovers of the loaves; the leftovers of the fish are mentioned separately (καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἰχθύων). Similarly, ἄρτος only explicitly occurs three times in the F4000, but I am including the implied reference in the disciples’ response, ἑπτὰ (8:5).

<sup>41</sup> Mark 6:37, 38, 44; 8:4, 5.

<sup>42</sup> The external evidence as well as the arguments for and against the originality of τοὺς ἄρτους are evenly divided (Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2d. ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 78). In keeping with the judgments of the editors of the NA<sup>27</sup> and UBS<sup>4</sup> and most Markan commentators, the originality of τοὺς ἄρτους is assumed.

<sup>43</sup> Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes*, 53–54.

### Summary

To summarize, six out of the twenty-one occurrences of ἄρτος, which equates to half of the episodes in which ἄρτος occurs, have a high probability of avoidability. In two episodes, ἄρτος is quite unexpected (6:8, 52); in three, ἄρτος either has no demonstrable role in the story (8:14) or no obvious or natural ties to the episode in which it occurs (6:52; 7:27); and in four, ἄρτος evokes or alludes to other episodes in which ἄρτος occurs (6:52; 7:2, 5, 27). In short, these six occurrences of ἄρτος, all of which occur in the so-called Bread Section of the Sea Crossing movement, make significant contributions to the rhetorical dimension of the narrative, which is the literary space motifs inhabit. The prominence of οἱ ἄρτοι in certain episodes is offered as additional support that ἄρτος satisfies the criterion of avoidability.

## THE ASSOCIATIONAL CLUSTER OF THE LOAVES MOTIF<sup>44</sup>

### I. INNER CORE

First, by virtue of its having satisfied the criteria of frequency and avoidability, ἄρτος constitutes the inner core of The Loaves motif associational cluster. As its name implies, The Loaves motif is principally oriented around the recurrence of the articular, plural occurrences of ἄρτος (2:26; 6:41ab, 44, 52; 7:2; 8:6, 19) as these are generally (though not exclusively) the more distinctive and rhetorically rich uses of ἄρτος in Mark, especially within the Sea Crossing movement. Nevertheless, all occurrences of ἄρτος are included in the associational cluster for, while every occurrence is not equally significant (e.g., idiomatic occurrences, as in 3:20), each contributes something to the motif. As Freedman observes, a motif “slips, as it were, into the author’s vocabulary, into the dialogue, and into his imagery, *often even at times when the symbolized referent is not immediately involved*. . . . The motif prepares us for the time when it will.”<sup>45</sup>

### II. SEMANTIC FRAMES

Second, occurrences of ἄρτος evoke a number of semantic frames in Mark. Of particular significance here is the general semantic frame BREAD. Substantives that have the potential of evoking BREAD in the Markan narrative are ἄζυμος and ζύμη.

---

<sup>44</sup> The data that is collected and filtered for inclusion in The Loaves motif associational cluster is presented in Tables 2a and 2b of Appendix B.

<sup>45</sup> Freedman, “Literary Motif,” 203 (emphasis added).

BREAD. In the agrarian societies of the ancient Mediterranean world, bread was the chief staple food, providing most of a person's daily intake of proteins and carbohydrates. Consequently, "a large portion of everyday life revolved around the production, distribution, preparation, and consumption" of cereal crops.<sup>46</sup> Given the importance of bread for daily subsistence, ἄρτος often served as a synonym for food and functioned figuratively for that which supports and sustains life.<sup>47</sup> Thus, it is not surprising that ἄρτος participates in a multiplicity of semantic frames in Mark. As Fowler observes,

Once our attention is drawn to it, we recognize immediately the frequency with which references to food and eating are to be found in the gospel. The gospel is full of references to eating, drinking, cups, loaves, foods, feasts, banquets, fasting, hunger, and leaven. The author enjoys interpreting the events of his story with the language of the dinner table: an exorcism may be called 'taking bread from children and giving it to dogs' (7:27); the deeds of the Pharisees and Herod may be called 'leaven' (8:15); Jesus' passion may be described as 'drinking the cup' and 'being baptized' (10:35–40, 14:36; cf. 7:4). Conversely, the author also interprets meals by means of non-culinary metaphors: eating with tax collectors and sinners is described as a doctor healing ill patients (2:15–17); the disciples' failure to fast is called a celebration with the bridegroom (2:18–20); the bread and cup of the Passover meal is called body and blood (14:22–25). We are repeatedly denied the luxury of taking the references to food and eating in Mark as literal, straightforward references. Rather, meals in Mark are constantly associated with metaphor—various episodes in the story may be interpreted by means of meal-metaphors or the meals themselves may be interpreted with non-meal-metaphors.<sup>48</sup>

Fowler's observations imply that references to food and meals constitute a major, narrative-wide motif in Mark, if not a central, overarching theme. Consequently, the number of semantic frames to which ἄρτος belongs and their pervasiveness throughout the narrative presents a challenge to defining the boundaries of The Loaves motif. If we were to begin with all of the semantic frames ἄρτος evokes, the process of constructing the motif's associational cluster would be prohibited by the sheer number of potential candidates. More importantly, while The Loaves motif undoubtedly participates in this larger motif of food and meals, it has a more specialized function in the narrative. So, while ἄρτος may evoke frames concerned with food and eating,

<sup>46</sup> Stephen A. Reed, "Bread," *ABD* 1:777.

<sup>47</sup> Friedemann Merkel, "ἄρτος," *NIDNTT* 1:250.

<sup>48</sup> Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes*, 132.

references to food and eating do not necessarily evoke ἄρτος and what it symbolizes in the narrative. Thus, we begin with a much more specific semantic frame, BREAD, which encompasses the preparation and consummation of ἄρτος.

*Exclusive Associations.* Ζύμη, which is leaven (not yeast), was a common raising agent for bread dough.<sup>49</sup> Although ζύμη is used figuratively in Mark, it occurs in an episode where ἄρτος is the main topic of discussion, and so both occurrences of ζύμη are included in the associational cluster (8:15ab). The adjective ἄζυμος is often used substantivally to denote unleavened bread. In Mark, τὰ ἄζυμα designates the Jewish feast of Unleavened Bread and provides the context for Jesus' last meal, a meal in which ἄρτος plays a prominent role, and so both occurrences of ἄζυμος are included in the associational cluster (14:1, 12).

### III. NARRATIVE ASSOCIATIONS

Third, substantives that are closely associated with ἄρτος in the narrative are ἰχθύδιον, ἰχθύς, κλάσμα, κοφίνος, σφυρίς, ποτήριον, and ψίχιον.

Κλάσμα and ψίχιον both represent ἄρτος as they denote fragments and crumbs of bread. Κοφίνος and σφυρίς are the two types of baskets used to gather up the leftover fragments of bread following the two feedings. The three remaining words instantiate the same required argument of the same or similar predicators as does ἄρτος. That is, ἰχθύς, ἰχθύδιον, and ποτήριον are associated with ἄρτος by experiencing the same actions as those experienced by ἄρτος. In the feeding of the 5000, Jesus *takes* and *blesses* the five loaves as well as the two fish (ἰχθύας, 6:41). Similarly, in the feeding of the 4000, Jesus *gives thanks* for the seven loaves and *blesses* a few fish (ἰχθύδιον), and both are *placed* before the crowds (8:6–8).<sup>50</sup> Finally, at the Last Supper, Jesus *takes* a cup (ποτήριον, 14:23), *gives thanks*, and *gives* it to his disciples, which are all actions performed on the ἄρτος as well (14:22).<sup>51</sup>

*Exclusive Associations.* Of these seven words, six are exclusively associated with ἄρτος in the narrative, and so all instances of these words are included in the associational cluster: ἰχθύδιον (8:7), ἰχθύς (6:38, 41ab, 43), κλάσμα (6:43; 8:8, 19,

<sup>49</sup> Charles Leslie Mitton, "New Wine in Old Wine Skins: IV. Leaven," *ExpTim* 84 (1972–73): 339–43.

<sup>50</sup> The verbs εὐχαριστέω and εὐλογέω do not exhibit the exact same argument structure, so on this occasion ἄρτος and ἰχθύδιον technically instantiate different arguments. Nevertheless, εὐχαριστέω and εὐλογέω are performing similar functions in the narrative, as the parallelism of 8:7–8 confirms (see also 14:22–23), and so the association between ἄρτος and ἰχθύδιον stands.

<sup>51</sup> Actually, the loaf is *blessed*, but again the overall point is not affected (see fn 50).

20), κοφίνος (6:43; 8:19), σφυρίς (8:8, 20), and ψίχιον (7:28). Only ποτήριον lacks exclusive association with ἄρτος.

*Included.* Ποτήριον is linked with ἄρτος in 14:23, yet none of the other five occurrences show any demonstrable connections with ἄρτος (7:4; 9:41; 10:38–39; 14:36). In 7:1–13, ποτήριον and ἄρτος occur in the same scene, but they are not connected. In 10:38–39 and 14:36, ποτήριον is employed as a metaphor for Jesus' fate and so corresponds to its use in 14:23. Yet despite this connection, the occurrences of ποτήριον in 10:38–39 and 14:36 do not evoke ἄρτος in their respective contexts. Consequently, only its occurrence in 14:23 is included in the associational cluster.

#### IV. MODIFIERS

Fourth, words, phrases, and constructions are identified that grammatically modify any instances of words included in the associational cluster after steps I–III: δηνάριον, διακόσιοι, δύο, δώδεκα, εἷς, ἑπτὰ, Ἡρώδης, ὀλίγος, πέντε, περισσεύμα, πλήρης, πλήρωμα, πόσος, πρόθεσις, τέκνον, Φαρισαῖοι, and χλωρός.<sup>52</sup>

*Exclusive Associations.* Six words are exclusively associated with words identified in I–III, and so all instances of these words are included in the associational cluster: διακόσιοι (6:37), πέντε (6:38, 41; 8:19), περισσεύμα (8:8), πλήρης (8:19), πρόθεσις (2:26), and χλωρός (6:39).

*Grammars.* Ten words and one phrase belong to at least one narrative grammar, and so only the particular instances of these words when they are functioning as a member of a narrative grammar are included in the associational cluster. Seven words belong to the QUANTITY grammar. In the feeding episodes, the number of loaves and fish are given as are the number of baskets of leftovers. These quantities are then rehearsed in ESC<sup>3</sup>, which underscores their rhetorical significance. Included in the cluster are δύο (6:38, 41ab), δώδεκα (6:43; 8:19), εἷς (8:14), ἑπτὰ (8:5, 6, 8, 20ab), ὀλίγος (8:7), πέντε (6:38, 41; 8:19), πόσος (6:38; 8:5, 19, 20), and the phrase δηναρίων διακοσίων (6:37). Three words belong to the ABUNDANCE grammar, which concerns the fragments collected following each of the feedings: περισσεύμα (8:8), πλήρης (8:19), and πλήρωμα (6:43; 8:20).

---

<sup>52</sup> Here, adjectives, appositives, and genitive nouns.

*Excluded.* Three words fail to satisfy the criteria of association and do not belong to any narrative grammars or microclusters, and so all of their occurrences are excluded from the associational cluster: Ἡρώδης, τέκνον, and Φαρισαῖοι.

## V. PREDICATORS

Finally, verbs are identified in which any instances of the words included in the associational cluster after steps I–III serve to instantiate a required argument:<sup>53</sup> ἀγοράζω, αἶρω, δίδωμι, ἐσθίω, εὐλογέω, εὐχαριστέω, ἔχω, λαμβάνω, κατακλάω, κλάω, μερίζω, παρατίθημι, συνίημι, and χορτάζω.

*Exclusive Associations.* Five words are exclusively associated with words from steps I–III, and so all instances of these words are included in the associational cluster: εὐχαριστέω (8:6; 14:23), κατακλάω (6:41), κλάω (8:6, 19; 14:22), παρατίθημι (6:41; 8:6ab, 7), and χορτάζω (6:42, 7:27; 8:4, 8).

*Microclusters.* Seven words belong to at least one narrative microcluster, and so only the particular instances of these words when they are functioning as a member of a microcluster are included in the associational cluster. Six words belong to the HOST microcluster, which comprises a series of associated actions performed by the host at the beginning of a Jewish meal or banquet:<sup>54</sup> δίδωμι (6:41; 8:6; 14:22, 23), εὐλογέω (6:41; 8:7; 14:22), εὐχαριστέω (8:6; 14:23), κατακλάω (6:41), κλάω (8:6, 19; 14:22), and λαμβάνω (6:41; 8:6; 14:22ab, 23). Strictly speaking, μερίζω does not belong to the HOST microcluster, but its use in 6:41 parallels that of κατακλάω and so is included in the associational cluster. Two words belong to the GIVE TO EAT microcluster, consisting of the idiom, δίδωμι ἐσθίειν, which appears to function as a verbal link between particular episodes: δίδωμι (2:26;<sup>55</sup> 5:43; 6:37ab) and ἐσθίω (5:43; 6:37ab).

*Included.* Included in the associational cluster are occurrences of ἐσθίω whose Patient argument is instantiated by ἄρτος (2:26a, [26b]; 3:20; 6:[37b], [42], 44; 7:2, 5; [8:8])<sup>56</sup> or by one of its narrative representatives (ψιχίον, 7:28), as well as

---

<sup>53</sup> Included are verbs whose arguments are lexically realized or permissibly absent.

<sup>54</sup> For detailed treatments of the evidence along with references to the relevant rabbinic literature and discussions in Strack-Billerbeck, see Gustaf Hermann Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua: Studies in the Gospels* (trans. Paul P. Levertoff; London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1929), 133–47; Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, 108–9, 174–77.

<sup>55</sup> In 2:26, I am treating ἔδωκεν as an ellipsis for δίδωμι ἐσθίειν.

<sup>56</sup> Brackets indicate ἄρτος instantiates the required argument as a DNC.



occurrences of σννήμι whose Topic argument is instantiated by ἄρτος (6:52; [8:17, 21]).<sup>57</sup> I have also included the two other occurrences of σννήμι as they bear close relation to ἄρτος. In 7:14, Jesus introduces a parable with the words, “Listen to me all of you and *understand*” (σύνετε), a parable that addresses food laws and a parable Jesus tells in response to those who have questioned him about his disciples eating *the loaves* (7:2; or, the loaf, 7:5) with unwashed hands. In 4:12, σννήμι occurs in the citation from Isaiah 6:9, which is recalled in 8:17–18, when Jesus is rebuking his disciples for not understanding about the loaves. In short, σννήμι, which occurs exclusively within the Sea Crossing movement, seems to have a special role in The Loaves motif.

*Excluded.* Two words fail to satisfy the criteria of association and do not belong to any narrative grammars or microclusters, and so all occurrences are excluded from the associational cluster: ἄρω and ἔχω.

#### CARRIERS OF THE LOAVES MOTIF

With the construction of the associational cluster now complete, it remains to make some observations leading to a judgment as to which episodes serve as the principal carriers of The Loaves motif. There are thirteen episodes in which at least one member of the associational cluster resides; all but two are located within the first half of Mark, and all but four within the Sea Crossing movement itself (Figure 6–8). Of particular note is the Bread Section (6:7–8:21) where 86 percent of all occurrences of ἄρτος and 82 percent of all cluster members are located and where seven of its ten episodes are carriers of The Loaves motif.

×	Reference	Episode
5	2:23–28 (26)	<b>Picking Grain on the Sabbath Controversy</b>
2	3:20–35 (20)	Jesus’ Family and Beelzebul Controversy
1	4:1–34 (12)	Parables Discourse
2	5:21–43 (43)	Hemorrhaging Woman and Jairus’ Daughter
1	6:7–32 (8)	Mission of the Twelve, Herod and John
34	6:33–44	<b>Feeding of the Five Thousand</b>
2	6:45–52 (52)	<b>ESC<sup>2</sup> — Walking on the Sea</b>
5	7:1–23	<b>Purity Discourse</b>
4	7:24–30 (27–28)	<b>Syrophenician Woman</b>

<sup>57</sup> See below for the argument that ἄρτος instantiates the Top of σννήμι in 8:17, 21.

<b>23</b>	<b>8:1–9</b>	<b>Feeding of the Four Thousand</b>
<b>23</b>	<b>8:13–21</b>	<b>ESC<sup>3</sup> — Discussion about The Loaves</b>
1	14:1–11 (1)	Conspiracy Plot and Anointing of Jesus
<b>11</b>	<b>14:12–31</b> (12, 22–23)	<b>Last Supper</b>

The column headed by × indicates the number of occurrences of members of the associational cluster in an episode. Numbers in parentheses indicate the verses in which members are found when they are not distributed throughout the episode. Principal carriers of The Loaves motif are **highlighted**.

**Figure 6–8: Carriers of The Loaves Motif**

Four episodes automatically stand out because they contain the highest concentration of individual members of the associational cluster: 6:33–44; 8:1–9; 8:13–21; and 14:12–31. Three other episodes stand out because they contain relatively high concentrations of cluster members: 6:45–52; 7:1–23; and 7:24–30. Moreover, in each of these episodes the members of the cluster are integral to what is going on, making these seven principal carriers of The Loaves motif.

Only one or two cluster elements are present in any of the remaining episodes, and on the whole they are incidental to what occurs in the episode. The notable exception is ESC<sup>2</sup>, which boasts the highly avoidable, οὐ γὰρ συνῆκαν ἐπὶ τοῖς ἄρτοις (6:52), which draws ESC<sup>2</sup> with its sea miracles into The Loaves motif. Thus, ESC<sup>2</sup> is also treated as a principal carrier of The Loaves motif.<sup>58</sup>

Thus, there are eight principal carriers of The Loaves motif; one located in M1, one in M5, and the remaining six comprise the bulk of the latter half of the Sea Crossing movement. What follows then is an exposition of The Loaves motif that focuses upon its eight principal episodes and that proceeds in narrative sequence except for the two feedings, which are discussed together.

<sup>58</sup> This provides a good illustration of the fact that frequency is not the sole determinant of significance.

## EXPLICATING THE LOAVES MOTIF

### THE PRINCIPAL CARRIERS OF THE LOAVES MOTIF

#### MARK 2:23–28, THE LOAVES OF PRESENTATION

	23	24	25	26	27	28
δίδωμι				x		
ἄρτος				x		
ἐσθίω				xx		
πρόθεσις				x		

**Figure 6–9: Members of The Loaves Motif in Mark 2:23–28**

Ἄρτος first appears in Mark 2:23–28, the fourth in a sequence of five controversy stories.<sup>59</sup> In this episode, the Pharisees question Jesus about his disciples’ unlawful activity of plucking grain on the sabbath (2:23–24). Jesus responds with two formally distinct answers.<sup>60</sup> First, Jesus recalls an incident from the life of David when he entered the house of God, ate the Loaves of Presentation, and gave some to his companions (2:25–26), and then he concludes with a two-part pronouncement: “The sabbath was created for man and not man for the sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath” (2:27–28). This brief episode has received a good deal of scholarly attention, especially its compositional history and how the constituent parts of the episode relate to one another.<sup>61</sup> How, for example, do David’s actions in 1 Samuel 21:1–6 provide a defense of the disciples’ actions in Mark? How does Jesus’ appeal to David’s actions in Mark 2:25–26 relate to his pronouncements regarding the sabbath in 2:27–28? And, what is the logical relationship between 2:27 and 2:28? Essential for understanding the narrative logic and function of this episode is the fact that its focus is not the behavior of the disciples but the authority of Jesus, as suggested by (1) the Pharisees’ question, (2) Jesus’ appeal to David, and (3) Jesus’ pronouncement about the Son of Man.

<sup>59</sup> Joanna Dewey, *Markan Public Debate: Literary Technique, Concentric Structure and Theology in Mark 2:1–3:6* (SBLDS 48; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1980).

<sup>60</sup> “Introduced by καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς and καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς respectively (vv. 25, 27)” (Dewey, *Markan*, 94; 229n116). “Mark nearly always uses the phrase καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς . . . to introduce new sayings material within a discourse that has already begun” (Philip Sellew, “Composition of Didactic Scenes in Mark’s Gospel,” *JBL* 108 (1989): 616).

<sup>61</sup> Maurice Casey, “Culture and Historicity: The Plucking of the Grain (Mark 2.23–28),” *NTS* 34 (1988): 1–23; Arland J. Hultgren, “The Formation of the Sabbath Pericope in Mark 2,23–28,” *JBL* 91 (1972): 38–43; Frans Neirynck, “Jesus and the Sabbath. Some Observations on Mark II:27,” in *Jésus aux Origines de la Christologie* (ed. J. Dupont; BETL 40; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1975), 227–70; Rod Parrott, “Conflict and Rhetoric in Mark 2:23–28,” *Semeia* 64 (1993): 117–37.

(1) In directing their inquiry to Jesus, the Pharisees are questioning not so much the disciples' unlawful behavior as Jesus' allowance of their unlawful behavior. After all, Jesus is not portrayed plucking grain, only his disciples, and the Pharisees do not accuse Jesus of breaking the sabbath, only his disciples. According to David Daube, in the ancient Mediterranean world, a teacher was responsible for the actions of his disciples. Consequently, "Jesus is responsible for this infringement of the law, all the more since it goes on before his very eyes. There is no trace of any hesitation in approaching him about it or in his taking up the complaint."<sup>62</sup> So, while the Pharisees ostensibly question the actions of Jesus' disciples, their real question concerns Jesus' prerogative in sanctioning such actions on the sabbath.<sup>63</sup> This, in turn, provides the key for understanding the nature of Jesus' appeal to David.

(2) In response, Jesus appeals to David's actions to defend not only his disciples' behavior but also his authorization of their behavior. In presenting David's *eating* of the Loaves of Presentation as motivated by his and his companions' need and hunger,<sup>64</sup> Jesus justifies his disciples' sabbath transgression on the presumption that they too were hungry and in need. In highlighting David's *giving* of the Loaves to his companions, Jesus defends his authority to authorize his disciples' actions.<sup>65</sup> Here, one can perceive the traits of a Markan two-step progression wherein the second step clarifies and/or takes precedence over the first. In the first step, Jesus appeals to his disciples' physical needs, while in the second step, he appeals to his own authority. The first step addresses the stated concern of the Pharisees' question, "Why are your disciples doing what is not permitted on the sabbath?," whereas the second step addresses their underlying concern, "Why are you allowing your disciples to do what is

---

<sup>62</sup> David Daube, "Responsibilities of Master and Disciples in the Gospels," *NTS* 19 (1972–73): 5.

<sup>63</sup> Dewey, *Markan*, 98.

<sup>64</sup> Neither the hunger of David nor that of his companions, who do not actually appear in the episode, is mentioned in 1 Sam 21:1–6, though perhaps is implied. Interestingly, "this passage received considerable attention in rabbinic studies which attempted in several ways to justify David's behavior (Str-B, 1:618–19)" (Guelich, *Mark*, 122; cf. D. E. Nineham, *The Gospel of St. Mark* (PGC; Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1963), 107). The Rabbis never "detect in 1 Samuel a hint at a sharing of the meal by David with a retinue . . . . On the contrary, the Rabbis draw attention to David's ravenous appetite that caused him to devour the entire supply at one sitting" (Daube, "Responsibilities," 5). This suggests that the emphasis upon *those who were with David*, occurring as it does at the end of both 2:25 (τοῖς σὺν αὐτῷ οὖσιν) and 2:26 (οἱ μετ' αὐτοῦ), is particular to Jesus or, perhaps more specifically, to the Markan Jesus given that these and similar expressions appear in reference to Jesus' disciples in Mark (1:36; 3:14; 4:35; 5:18, 40).

<sup>65</sup> "The logic of Jesus' argument . . . implies a covert claim to a personal authority at least as great as that of David" (France, *Mark*, 145).

not permitted on the sabbath?” Thus, Jesus’ initial response (2:25–26) ends on a christological note, as does his second response in 2:27–28.<sup>66</sup>

(3) Likewise, Jesus’ second response (2:27–28) exhibits a two-step progression that ends on a christological note. In declaring that, “the sabbath came into being for man and not man for the sabbath” (2:27), Jesus is adding to his physical-needs justification of the disciples’ behavior. Jesus continues, however, declaring, “so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath” (2:28), which Nineham suggests “does not in strict logic follow from v. 27; if the sabbath is subordinate to the needs of men in general, as v. 27 says, why would it need the eschatological Son of man to be Lord of the sabbath?”<sup>67</sup> The answer lies in the focus upon Jesus’ authority (vs. the disciples’ actions) maintained throughout the episode. Nineham fails to discern in Jesus’ appeal to David’s giving of the Loaves a defense of his own divine authority. Mark 2:28 is not the logical conclusion of 2:27 but the second step of a two-step progression. Jesus’ authority derives from his status as God’s anointed, as did David’s authority. Just as Jesus, as the Son of Man, has the authority to forgive sins (2:10), so also Jesus, as the Son of Man, has the authority to declare the sabbath subservient to human need (2:28) and, on this occasion, to provide bread for his hungry companions by permitting them to pick grain on the sabbath, which, under normal circumstances, would be unlawful, just as David provided bread for his hungry companions by giving them the Loaves of Presentation, which, under normal circumstances, were only lawful for the priests to eat.

One question, little discussed, is whether David’s actions regarding the Loaves of Presentation function rhetorically within the Markan narrative. This question arises because ἐσθίω and δίδωμι ἐσθίειν (which occurs here as an ellipsis) belong to The Loaves associational cluster and because τοὺς ἄρτους τῆς προθέσεως instantiates their Patient arguments (2:26). Moreover, David’s *giving* of the *Loaves* to his companions *to eat* cannot help but anticipate the two occasions where Jesus *gives loaves* to his companions for distribution to the crowds *to eat* (6:41; 8:6) and the one occasion where he *gives a loaf* to his companions for them *to eat* (14:22).<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup> Similarly, Robert J. Banks, *Jesus and the Law in the Synoptic Tradition* (SNTSMS 28; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 115; Dewey, *Markan*, 97–98.

<sup>67</sup> Nineham, *Mark*, 106.

<sup>68</sup> Harald Riesenfeld hints at these very connections (*The Gospel Tradition* (trans. E. Margaret Rowley and Robert A. Kraft; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), 119n10).

	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44
δίδωμι					xx				x			
ἐσθίω					xx					x		x
δηνάρ. διακό.					x							
ἄρτος					x	x			xx			x
πόσος						x						
πέντε						x			x			
δύο						x			xx			
ἰχθύς						x			xx		x	
χλωρός							x					
λαμβάνω									x			
εὐλογέω									x			
κατακλάω									x			
παρατίθημι									x			
μερίζω									x			
χορτάζω										x		
κλάσμα											x	
δώδεκα											x	
κόφινος											x	
πλήρωμα											x	

Figure 6–10: Members of The Loaves Motif in Mark 6:33–44

Mark 6:33–44 narrates the first feeding, which takes place on the western, Jewish shore of the Sea of Galilee following the disciples’ return from their successful Galilean mission. Because so many people are coming and going, Jesus suggests they get away in order to rest for awhile. Their attempt is thwarted, however, when a large crowd witnesses their departure by boat and runs on ahead, arriving at their destination ahead of them. Disembarking, Jesus sees the crowd and has compassion upon them for they are “like sheep without a shepherd” and so begins to teach them (6:34). The remainder of the episode can be divided into three scenes: Jesus and the disciples debating the best way to feed the crowd (6:35–38), Jesus hosting a banquet with loaves and fish (6:39–42), and the disciples gathering the leftovers (6:43–44). Of all the carriers of The Loaves motif, this episode exhibits the greatest number and density of individual members of the associational cluster, pointing to its relative importance for The Loaves motif. These elements, which are confined to the final three scenes, are key for understanding the roles of Jesus and the disciples and the theme of abundance.

### *Old Testament Echoes*

This episode is replete with echoes of OT texts, themes, and images, which were of eschatological and typological import in the first century and which serve as specialized semantic frames within which the meaning and significance of this feeding is to be understood. For example, the wilderness setting, the feeding of a multitude with bread, the groupings into hundreds and fifties, the reclining upon the green grass, and the number twelve have all been identified as intentionally evocative of Israel's Passover and Exodus traditions, specifically of the miraculous provision of manna during Israel's wilderness sojourn.<sup>69</sup> It is not insignificant, then, that among first-century hopes for national restoration was the expectation of a prophet like Moses who would inaugurate the New Exodus, a sign of which would be the repetition of the miracle of the manna.<sup>70</sup>

It is likely that such expectations stand behind the narrator's description of the people as "like sheep without a shepherd" (6:34), an OT metaphor possessing both Mosaic and Davidic connotations. This expression first occurs in connection with Moses' request that YHWH appoint a successor to lead the people so that they would not be "like sheep without a shepherd" (Num 27:16–17), which YHWH grants by commissioning Joshua (=Jesus, LXX). Subsequent to its introduction here, this metaphor recurs in the OT to describe situations in which "the people [are] suffering either through lack of strong leadership (Num 27:17; 1 Kgs 22:17 // 2 Chr 18:16; Jdt 11:19) or through evil rulers (Ezek 34:8; Zech 10:2)."<sup>71</sup> Of particular interest here is Ezekiel 34 where YHWH criticizes Israel's *shepherds* for attending to their own extravagant luxuries to the detriment of the sheep's health, well-being, and security. The sheep suffer for want of a shepherd (34:8); consequently, YHWH will remove these so-called shepherds and then will seek out and gather his scattered flock himself and feed them with good pasture (34:11–16). Moreover, YHWH will judge between his sheep and declares,

---

<sup>69</sup> Boring, *Mark*, 179–87; Madeleine Boucher, *The Mysterious Parable: A Literary Study* (CBQMS 6; Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1977): 69–70; Marcus, *Mark* 1–8, 404–21; Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 238–40; For a detailed treatment of the parallels between the Jewish feeding and Exodus 16 see William Richard Stegner, *Narrative Theology in Early Jewish Christianity* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster, 1989), 53–81.

<sup>70</sup> Boucher, "Mysterious Parable," 74; Dale C. Allison, Jr., "Psalm 23 (22) in Early Christianity: A Suggestion," *IBS* 5 (1983): 135; Marcus, *Mark* 1–8, 408, 19; Watts, *New Exodus*, 232.

<sup>71</sup> And both nuances may apply here (Marcus, *Mark* 1–8, 406).

I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, YHWH, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them (34:23–24).

In addition, Dale C. Allison has suggested that references to the shepherd (6:34), the command for the people to be seated upon the green grass (6:39), the people's satisfaction (6:44), and even perhaps the seaside setting (6:34) collectively conjure up the picture painted by the psalmist in Psalm 23 where "the shepherd cares for his flock on the green grass by the water, and the sheep have no lack."<sup>72</sup> If Mark is drawing upon Psalm 23, Allison argues, then we have another early Christian text—besides Revelation 17:17 and 1 Clement 26—that interprets Psalm 23 eschatologically through identifying Jesus as the shepherd, a tradition which probably owes itself to "the eschatological connotation which the title 'shepherd' had in Judaism," as reflected in such texts as Ezekiel 34, Zechariah 9–14, and Psalms of Solomon 17.<sup>73</sup>

### *The Role of Jesus*

In his treatment of the socio-economic dimension of the feeding narratives, Richard I. Pervo notes, "The immediate context of both primary accounts of the Feeding of the Five Thousand is *leadership*. Mark 6:34 speaks of πρόβατα μὴ ἔχοντα ποιμένα, John 6:15 of an effort to make Jesus king."<sup>74</sup> The characterization of the people as sheep without a shepherd points in two directions at once. It points forward, setting the stage for the episode's presentation of Jesus as the eschatological shepherd-king, even as it points backward to the preceding episode, serving as an implicit critique of Herod's leadership as king. If the people gathered to Jesus are a shepherdless flock, it is because their *de facto* shepherd has failed them; King Herod has gone the way of the corrupt shepherds of Ezekiel 34, making himself fat while the people suffer for want of leadership and food. Thus, it is into this concrete, desperate situation that Jesus steps and satisfies the people's hunger through two principal actions, teaching and feeding.

---

<sup>72</sup> Allison, "Psalm 23," 134.

<sup>73</sup> Allison, "Psalm 23," 136. This eschatological orientation is "shared by some rabbinic interpretations of Psalm 23 (*Gen. Rab.* 88.5; *Exod. Rab.* 25.7; 50.5; *Num. Rab.* 21.21)" (Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 408).

<sup>74</sup> Richard I. Pervo, "Panta Koina: The Feeding Stories in the Light of Economic Data and Social Practice," in *Religious Propaganda and Missionary Competition in the New Testament World: Essays Honoring Dieter Georgi* (ed. Lukas Bormann, Kelly Del Tredici and Angela Standhartinger; NovTSup 74; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 187 (emphasis added).



Interestingly, this connection between Jesus' teaching and his feeding parallel the connection between his teaching and exorcising in the Capernaum synagogue in his first public appearance (1:20–28). There Jesus is described as teaching though the specific content of that teaching is never disclosed, though presumably it concerned the advent of God's kingdom, given the programmatic summary in 1:14–15. Instead, the exorcism is described in detail, and Jesus' authority over the unclean spirit is regarded as a new *teaching* (1:27). Thus, Jesus' exorcising is inexorably tied to his teaching and so discloses something of the nature of God's kingdom and Jesus' identity as one who announces the kingdom with such demonstrable authority. Similarly, in 6:33–44, Jesus is described as teaching without attending to the content of that teaching. Instead, the attention is focused upon his feeding of the crowd. Given the “typically Markan fusion of the motif of wonder-working power with that of teaching,”<sup>75</sup> the implied reader can expect Jesus' feeding to be connected to his teaching about the kingdom, thereby disclosing something of the nature of that kingdom and his identity as the one who performs such an amazing deed. That manna (bread) became a symbol for Torah (teaching) in postbiblical Judaism<sup>76</sup> strengthens this claim that a connection obtains between Jesus' actions of teaching and feeding.

Yet, to understand the significance of this Jewish feeding, one must identify the semantic frame evoked by Jesus' actions and within which his actions derive their meaning, namely, that of a Greco-Roman banquet. Jesus' instruction that everyone *recline* in *symposia* “gives a festive, celebratory tone to the narrative.”<sup>77</sup> In the ancient Mediterranean world, *reclining* (ἀνακλίνω, 6:39; ἀναπίπτω, 6:40) was a posture most associated with formal dinner parties, banquets, and festivals. In a Palestinian Jewish context, everyday meals were normally taken seated, but reclining was particularly associated with Passover<sup>78</sup> and so contributes to the episode's Passover typology,<sup>79</sup> as does the use of συμπόσιον since, by the first century, the Seder had acquired many of the features of a Greek symposium.<sup>80</sup> While it is possible to see in the groupings into *hundreds* and *fifties* an allusion to the (militaristic) organization of Israel during its

---

<sup>75</sup> Marcus, *Mark* 1–8, 417.

<sup>76</sup> Peder Borgen, *Bread from Heaven: An Exegetical Study of the Concept of Manna in the Gospel of John and the Writings of Philo* (NovTSup 10; Leiden: Brill, 1965), 114.

<sup>77</sup> Boring, *Mark*, 186.

<sup>78</sup> Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, 48–49.

<sup>79</sup> Marcus, *Mark* 1–8, 407.

<sup>80</sup> Siegfried Stein, “The Influence of Symposia Literature on the Literary Form of the Pesah Haggadah,” *JJS* 7 (1957): 13–44.

wilderness sojourn (Exod 7:4; 18:10), these numbers “also parallel the means by which rations were distributed and the populace arranged for civic festivals.”<sup>81</sup> Finally, the fact that all were *satisfied* (ἐχορτάσθησαν, 6:42) fits a banquet context wherein guests are not simply given food sufficient for subsistence but enough to be satiated.

Within this frame, Jesus’ actions of *taking* the five loaves, of *blessing*, *breaking*, and *giving* them to his disciples for distribution depict him, first and foremost, as the host of a banquet (6:41). That is, Jesus is not simply portrayed as a miracle worker who, like Elisha, can fashion a feast from a few loaves (2 Kgs 4:42–44) but as a host who not only satisfies his hungry guests but brings them into fellowship with one another,<sup>82</sup> as signified by the crowd’s organization into discrete dinner parties, or table fellowship groups.<sup>83</sup> Thus, the familiar designation of this episode as a *feeding* tends to obscure the fact that the reader is being presented with an account of a *meal*—a banquet, a table fellowship on a grand scale—which in turn obscures the connections between this and other examples of Jesus’ table fellowship (e.g., 2:15; 14:3) and also obscures the contrast between this banquet presided over by Jesus and the banquet presided over by Herod (6:21–28), which could not be more different from one another. One banquet is held in a palace, the other out-of-doors in the wilderness. One is comprised of invited guests consisting of courtiers, officers, and the leading men of Galilee, while the other is comprised of uninvited guests, most likely the riffraff of Galilean society. On one menu are the staples of bread and fish, on the other a severed head on a dinner platter. One is the epitome of decorum, the other of decadence,<sup>84</sup> one of life, the other of death. The juxtaposition of these two Markan banquets is not accidental. By presenting Jesus as the host of an eschatologically-oriented wilderness feast, Jesus is cast as the Davidic shepherd-king of Ezekiel 34 who, in contrast to the so-called *king* Herod,<sup>85</sup> gathers the scattered sheep of Israel and feeds them (34:12–15) and as the Mosaic prophet who rains down the eschato-

---

<sup>81</sup> Pervo, “Panta Koina,” 188.

<sup>82</sup> “*Symposia* were celebrations of friendship and meals intended as instruments for building community” (Pervo, “Panta Koina,” 188).

<sup>83</sup> This picture is communicated via the distributive συμπόσια συμπόσια (6:39).

<sup>84</sup> The account of Herodias’ daughter dancing and pleasing the king and his guests is “a piece of scandalous ‘lower-class’ gossip,” since dancers at *symposia* were not of the aristocracy (Pervo, “Panta Koina,” 169n30).

<sup>85</sup> Unlike his father, Herod Antipas was never a βασιλεὺς (*contra* Mark 6:14, 22, 25, 26, 27) but a τετραάρχης as Matthew (14:1) and Luke (3:19; 9:7; Acts 13:1) are well aware. Mark’s use of this title is not a mistake as some suppose but a rhetorical strategy in service of the contrast between Herod and Jesus in terms of their respective kingdoms and kingships (Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes*, 121).

logical manna and goes before the people so that they will not be like sheep without a shepherd (Num 27:17; Deut 18:15, 18; 34:10–11).

#### *Excursus — Eucharistic Interpretations*

In offering this interpretation of Jesus’ actions, I have yet to consider the relationship between this Jewish meal and another Jewish meal Jesus hosts, his last meal with his disciples (14:12–25). In both episodes, Jesus performs the same actions, in the same sequence, with near verbal precision, as Figure 6–11 demonstrates.

<b>6:41a</b>	καὶ λαβὼν τοὺς πέντε ἄρτους καὶ τοὺς δύο ἰχθύας . . .
<b>14:22a</b>	καὶ ἐσθιόντων αὐτῶν λαβὼν ἄρτον
<b>6:41b</b>	εὐλόγησεν καὶ κατέκλασεν τοὺς ἄρτους καὶ ἐδίδου τοῖς μαθηταῖς [αὐτοῦ]
<b>14:22a</b>	εὐλογήσας ἐκλάσεν καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς

**Figure 6–11: Horizontal-Line Synopsis of Mark 6:41 and 14:22–23**

The repetition is unmistakable, yet its significance is much debated. Given these verbal links with the Last Supper and early Christian traditions of the Lord’s Supper (e.g. 1 Cor 11:23–26), many scholars posit eucharistic connotations in the actions Jesus performs on the five loaves, while others deny any such connotations. Space does not permit an adequate assessment of this debate except to note that problems exist on both sides. What exactly, for example, constitutes a *eucharistic* interpretation of the Jewish feeding? As Fowler opines:

We will refrain from defining the adjective “eucharistic” more carefully because such restraint is also practiced by those who indulge in its use. The term, as commonly used, is so vague as to be nearly meaningless, . . . to attach this label to the feeding stories is not to interpret them.<sup>86</sup>

On the other hand, arguments against eucharistic interpretations can be overly dismissive. Guelich, for example, argues that the presence of fish and leftovers, which find no place in the Last Supper, and the absence of wine and Jesus’ words of institution, which are fundamental to the Last Supper, “speak against [the feeding’s] ever having been taken as a eucharistic meal.”<sup>87</sup> Yet, why must the feeding itself be an actual eucharistic *meal*—whatever that might mean—before it can be meaningfully

<sup>86</sup> Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes*, 138, 140.

<sup>87</sup> Guelich, *Mark*, 342.

connected to the Lord's Supper and/or the Last Supper, as Guelich's logic implies? Moreover, do the differences Guelich notes between the episodes really prevent the verbal similarities that do exist from linking the feedings and the Suppers in rhetorically-significant ways?

Fowler claims that interpreting the feedings eucharistically or as possessing eucharistic connotations violates the text by reading it out of order and by relying upon information extrinsic to the text. He campaigns for the "rightful measure of [the text's] autonomy"<sup>88</sup> in guiding its own interpretation, insisting on readings that are based upon information intrinsic to the text and adhere to the story's internal chronology. Yet, when Fowler decries reading the feedings in light of the Last Supper because it transgresses the text's internal chronology, he essentially disavows foreshadowing as a rhetorical strategy. Likewise, when he decries reading the feedings in light of the Lord's Supper traditions because it relies upon knowledge extrinsic to the text, he effectively prohibits the author from making extratextual allusions and evoking semantic frames. Fowler's position is indefensible from the standpoint of linguistic and literary theory, not to mention inconsistent with Fowler's own narrative-critical approach.

I affirm Fowler's text-oriented approach. Certainly, the Last Supper in Mark should be read in light of the two feedings, which precede and anticipate it. Moreover, neither the Last Supper narrative nor the Lord's Supper traditions should be allowed to run roughshod over the Markan feeding narratives, rendering them so "eucharistic" so as to eclipse their other contributions to the narrative. Yet, in his attempt to safeguard against such abuses, Fowler overcompensates by excluding eucharistic interpretations a priori, at least on a *first* reading. Fowler does acknowledge that

on a second or later reading of the gospel we can scarcely deny to the reader his knowledge of what lies ahead in the story as he reads it. [A] reader engaged in a second reading of the gospel has every right (duty?) to read the feeding stories in light of what lies ahead, . . . but this still does not justify the wholesale import of extrinsic cargo into the text. We are talking about re-reading the text in light of the text.<sup>89</sup>

Here, Fowler qualifies his initial position, but he fails to go far enough. While he ultimately allows for the feedings to be read in light of the Last Supper narrative, he still operates with a methodological prejudice against information extrinsic to the

---

<sup>88</sup> Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes*, 141.

<sup>89</sup> Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes*, 145–46.

text, precluding the possibility of reading them in light of early Christian eucharistic practices. His distinction between the status of information intrinsic versus extrinsic to the text is highly problematic for every act of narrative communication requires the implied reader to draw upon background information (historical, cultural, social, economic, etc.) and semantic frames (general and specialized) presupposed by the narrative. When the implied reader encounters Jesus taking, blessing, breaking, and giving bread, the question is not, “Are any frames being evoked?,” but, “Which frames are being evoked?” As we have seen, this cluster of actions evokes a *general semantic frame* whereby Jesus’ actions are those of a symposium or banquet host. If we allow for foreshadowing or re-reading, then Jesus’ actions may also evoke a Markan *narrative frame* whereby Jesus’ actions are to be understood in relation to the Gentile feeding and the Last Supper narratives where those same actions are performed. Finally, if we presume that the implied reader is familiar with traditions of the Lord’s Supper, then Jesus’ actions may also evoke a *specialized semantic frame*, wherein they are to be understood in relation to those of a host of a distinctive type of symposium, the Christian eucharist. Of course, determining which frames are being evoked and to what extent is a matter of interpretation; nevertheless, there is no defensible rationale for excluding the *possibility* that Jesus’ actions in 6:41 are intended to evoke the Last Supper and/or early Christian eucharistic practices, even on a first reading.

### *The Role of the Disciples*

Up to this point in Mark, apart from their recently-concluded Galilean tour, the disciples have essentially played no role in Jesus’ kingdom mission. Often, they do not even appear in episodes, especially those in which Jesus performs mighty deeds even though their presence can be assumed from clues provided by the narrative (e.g., 5:1–20, note 5:1; 1:40–45, note 1:38). Thus, their sudden prominence in the Jewish meal is striking, though not accidental as it coincides with their having just returned from their first apostolic mission. Thus, their prominent role in the Jewish meal is to be construed as part and parcel of their apostolic vocation.

Over the course of the episode, the disciples engage in six different activities, five of which involve at least one element of the associational cluster. It is the disciples who suggest to Jesus that he send the crowd away so that they might find food (6:35–36). When Jesus suggests that *they* feed the crowd, the disciples express incre-

dulity given the resources such an undertaking would require (6:37). It is the disciples who secure the five loaves and two fish (6:38), who are charged with crowd control (6:39), who distribute the loaves and the fish (6:42), and who collect the baskets of leftovers (6:43). Commentators differ in their assessment of how these actions are to be understood. The first three actions, in particular, are often singled out as more examples of the disciples' incomprehension, but there are reasons to question these conclusions.

For example, LaVerdiere sees in the disciples' request that the crowd be sent away to find food a contrast to Jesus' compassion. "Unlike Jesus, who reached out to the crowd and taught them, the disciples wanted to send them away."<sup>90</sup> Yet the disciples are not forsaking their leadership role, as LaVerdiere suggests, for there has been nothing in their training or experience thus far that would suggest that they had been granted the ability to feed people, let alone a crowd of people. Moreover, none of the deeds they have witnessed Jesus performing have involved food. Their request cannot be construed as a lack of faith in his abilities but instead testifies to a compassion comparable to Jesus' own. After all, it is the disciples who note the lateness of the hour and remoteness of the location. Likewise, the disciples' incredulity at being directed to feed the crowd cannot be construed as a lack of faith or incomprehension, for the same reasons.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, neither Jesus nor the narrator offers a negative evaluation of the disciples' request or their incredulity, as they are certainly wont to do (e.g., 4:13; 4:40–41; 6:52; 7:18; 8:17–21).

Marcus' claim that the disciples' question, "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread?" (6:36), borders on the sarcastic<sup>92</sup> does not sufficiently appreciate what he himself acknowledges, namely, that their skeptical response is a "literary device for ironically highlighting the extraordinary nature of the wonder that is about to be accomplished."<sup>93</sup> This device appears in certain OT feeding texts, most notably 2 Kings 4:42–44, which exhibits the same narrative structure as the present episode. Here Elisha instructs his servant to place twenty barley loaves and ears of grain before hungry men, to which the servant replies, "How can I set this before a

---

<sup>90</sup> LaVerdiere, *Beginning*, 1:172.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Frank J. Matera, "The Incomprehension of the Disciples and Peter's Confession (Mark of 6:14–8:30)," *Bib* 70 (1989): 155.

<sup>92</sup> So also, Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes*, 116.

<sup>93</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 418.

hundred men?” Elisha repeats the instruction saying, “Give it to the people and let them eat, for thus says YHWH, ‘They shall eat and have some left.’” Finally, Fowler’s claim that the disciples’ possession of bread (6:38) despite their “having been expressly ordered not to carry such, is yet another indication of the failure of their mission,”<sup>94</sup> completely disregards the fact that Jesus’ prohibition against carrying bread was not a general prohibition constitutive of a way of life but specific to their itinerant missionary activities.

In the end, commentators see incomprehension where none is to be found. Yet, even if the reader were expected to see incomprehension in some of the disciples’ actions and responses here, it would not reach the level of culpable incomprehension the disciples exhibit elsewhere in Mark, most notably in the very next episode, ESC<sup>2</sup>, and extending through ESC<sup>3</sup>. Instead, the positive portrayal of the disciples following their Galilean mission continues unabated through the end of the Jewish meal. The disciples may not be fully cognizant of their apostolic responsibilities and potential just yet (6:37), but Jesus does not chastise them. Instead he teaches them what it will mean for them to become fishers of people, which in turn provides a standard of judgment by which to evaluate the disciples’ actions in subsequent episodes. As Kelber notes, “Rather than their helping Jesus feed the people, this is a case of Jesus showing them how to feed the people. With this experience in mind, they ought to be able to assume their role as shepherds when the occasion arises.”<sup>95</sup>

### *The Theme of Abundance*

The Jewish meal concludes on a note of abundance: everyone eats and is filled (6:42); twelve full baskets of leftovers are collected (6:43); and those who ate the loaves number five thousand (6:44). Certainly, these details indicate the miraculous nature of Jesus’ miracle but that is not their primary purpose, for there is no uptake on the part of the crowd or the disciples, that is, none of the normal expressions of shock, amazement, or fear which often serve to stress the magnitude of Jesus’ mighty deeds. Instead these details underscore the eschatological import of the meal; this is no ordinary abundance but eschatological superabundance. Jesus’ feeding of five thousand with five loaves and a few fish far outstrips Elisha’s feeding of a hundred

---

<sup>94</sup> Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes*, 118.

<sup>95</sup> Kelber, *Kingdom*, 56–57.

with twenty loaves and a few heads of grain. Similarly, the presence of leftovers from the loaves contrasts with the precise sufficiency of the manna, of which everyone received the same portion and any leftovers spoiled (Exod 16:18–20). This superabundance is a sign that “the eschatological age [is] at hand”<sup>96</sup> and establishes Jesus’ superiority over Elisha and, especially, over Moses, who by the first century loomed larger in the Jewish traditions about manna than he did in the original OT accounts.<sup>97</sup> Beyond this, the abundance of leftovers plays an ongoing role in the Markan narrative, the meaning and significance of which unfolds incrementally throughout the remaining episodes of the bread cycle.

#### MARK 8:1–9, THE GENTILE MEAL

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
ἄρτος				×	×	×			
χορτάζω				×				×	
πόσος					×				
ἑπτὰ					×	×		×	
λαμβάνω						×			
εὐχαριστέω						×			
κλάω						×			
δίδωμι						×			
παρατίθημι						xx	×		
ἰχθύδιον							×		
ὀλίγος							×		
εὐλογέω							×		
ἐσθίω								×	
περίσσευμα								×	
κλάσμα								×	
σπυρίς								×	

**Figure 6–12: Members of The Loaves Motif in Mark 8:1–9**

The second Markan feeding takes place on the eastern, Gentile shore of the Sea of Galilee (8:1–9), and takes place shortly after Jesus grants the Syrophenician woman’s request for healing on account of her word that “even the dogs under the table (i.e., Gentiles) are eating from the children’s crumbs” (7:28). Thus, both the narrative context and the geopolitical markers indicate that, on this occasion, the

<sup>96</sup> Stegner, *Narrative Theology*, 77.

<sup>97</sup> Stegner, *Narrative Theology*, 73, 77.



crowd gathered to Jesus is comprised of Gentiles.<sup>98</sup> The structural and verbal parallels between these two Markan meals are extensive<sup>99</sup> and, from a narrative standpoint, indicate that this Gentile meal is to be understood in relation to its Jewish predecessor. This is confirmed by the episode's introduction, which explicitly recalls the Jewish meal, "In those days, when there was *again* a great crowd having nothing to eat" (8:1), and further confirmed in ESC<sup>3</sup> where both meals are recalled and rhetorically linked. Because it presupposes the Jewish feeding, the narrative of the Gentile feeding does not require the same level of detail, and so is 30 percent shorter and possesses 33 percent fewer cluster elements (Figure 6–13).<sup>100</sup>

	Jewish Meal	Gentile Meal	Jewish Meal	Gentile Meal	
	34×	23×	34×	23×	
ἄρτος	xxxxx	xxx		x	περίσσευμα
ἰχθύς, ἰχθύδιον	xxxx	x	x		πλήρωμα
κόφινος	x		x		χλωρός
σπυρίς		x	xxx	x	δίδωμι
κλάσμα	x	x	xxxxx	x	ἐσθίω
δηνάρ. διακοσίων	x		x	x	εὐλογέω
δύο	xxx			x	εὐχαριστέω
πέντε	xx		x	x	κατακλάω, κλάω
ἐπτὰ		xxx	x	x	λαμβάνω
δώδεκα	x		x		μερίζω
ὀλίγος		x	x	xxx	παρατίθημι
πόσος	x	x	x	xx	χορτάζω

**Figure 6–13: Associational Cluster Elements in the Markan Meals**

Most of the differences in detail are not significant for our purposes, so, in what follows, attention will be given to those that are. The similarities and differences between these two narratives reveals that the characterization of Jesus and the theme of abundance remain essentially unchanged while the characterization of the disciples undergoes some subtle yet significant alterations.

<sup>98</sup> Some scholars see in Jesus' statement that some have come ἀπὸ μακρόθεν a clue to the crowd's ethnicity. "The Old Testament repeatedly describes Gentiles as those who are 'far off' (e.g., Deut 28:49; 29:22; 1 Kgs 8:41; Isa 39:3; 60:4; cf. Eph 2:13, 17; Acts 2:39)" (Boring, *Mark*, 218). "'From afar' is, both in rabbinic writings and in some places in the Second Testament (Acts 2:39 and Ephesians 2:11–22), a term applied to the Gentiles generally" (van Iersel, *Reading Mark*, 111).

<sup>99</sup> For a synopsis showing the similarities and differences between these two episodes in English, see Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 493–95; in Greek, see Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes*.

<sup>100</sup> Jewish Meal = 185 words; 34 cluster elements.

Gentile Meal = 131 words; 23 cluster elements.

### *The Role of Jesus*

In the Gentile feeding, Jesus' role is the same as in the Jewish feeding. Jesus is still portrayed as *compassionate* (σπλαγχνίζομαι, 8:2; cf. 6:34), although it is presented differently. On this occasion, it is Jesus, and not the disciples, who draws attention to the crowd's need (8:2). Though Jesus is not explicitly presented as teaching the crowd, the reader is probably to assume this from the crowd's having been with him for three days. Finally, Jesus is again consigned the role of a banquet host as once again he *takes* the loaves, *gives thanks*,<sup>101</sup> *breaks*, and *gives* them to his disciples for distribution.

Yet, these actions no longer evoke a BANQUET *semantic* frame, as they did in the Jewish meal, but a BANQUET *narrative* frame. That is, given that this is the second episode in which these actions are clustered together, they do not evoke the BANQUET semantic frame *independent* of the narrative content this frame has acquired through its evocation in the Jewish feeding. This acquired narrative content includes the wilderness setting, Jesus instantiating the Agent of these verbs and the loaves their Patient, the disciples instantiating the Goal of δίδωμι, and the crowd as the ultimate beneficiaries. Moreover, all of the elements constitutive of the BANQUET narrative frame are reinforced through their repetition in the Gentile meal. Consequently, despite the absence of the OT allusions that provided the scriptural frames within which Jesus' actions and identity in the first feeding were to be understood, his performing the same actions in this second meal indicate that he has returned to his role as host, reinforcing his previously-established identity as Israel's Davidic shepherd-king and Mosaic-like prophet who shepherds by teaching, feeding, and gathering sheep into community. The only difference is that this is a Gentile flock, which discloses something about the nature of Jesus' vocation and the scope of the kingdom he proclaims.

### *The Theme of Abundance*

As with the Jewish feeding, the Gentile feeding concludes on a note of abundance: the people eat and are filled (8:8a); seven baskets full of leftovers are collected (8:8b); and those who eat number four thousand (8:9). A few scholars have attempted to see in these statistics indications that Jesus' power is waning for, when compared to the Jewish feeding, Jesus feeds fewer people and the disciples collect fewer leftovers de-

---

<sup>101</sup> Here I am treating εὐλόγησεν (6:41) and εὐχαριστήσας (8:6) as synonyms.

spite beginning with more resources.<sup>102</sup> This sort of reading, however, misses the mark because the numbers are still overwhelmingly impressive. Feeding four thousand with seven loaves and a few fish and having seven baskets of leftovers still qualifies as eschatological superabundance. These numbers are further confirmation that the eschatological age has dawned and Jesus is its eschatological agent. These numbers possess added significance given that those who are filled are Gentiles, which again discloses something about the nature of Jesus' vocation and the scope of the kingdom he proclaims.

### *The Role of the Disciples*

Unchanged in this feeding are the disciples' provision of the starter loaves and fish (8:5, 7), their distribution of the food to the crowd (8:6), and their collecting of leftovers (6:8). Jesus assumes the responsibility for seating the crowd, but this seems to be an inconsequential modification. In short, the disciples once again play the role of household servants who assist their master in providing for the guests at a grand banquet. Yet, in the opening scene of the episode, the disciples' role exhibits some slight, but significant modifications in comparison with their role in the first meal.

First, in the Jewish feeding, it is the disciples who show concern for the crowd by noting the crowd's need for nourishment; yet, here, Jesus takes over this role. Thus, the Gentile feeding lacks reference to any concern and compassion the disciples' might have for the crowd. Second, although Jesus does not instruct the disciples to give the crowd something to eat as he did in the first feeding, he does express to them his concerns about the crowd's desperate situation, an unprecedented move by Jesus in Mark and one that gives the impression that he expects his disciples to do something to address the situation,<sup>103</sup> much as they had expected Jesus to do something when they approached him with their concerns in the Jewish feeding. The disciples' response confirms this reading for they seem to understand Jesus to be asking them to feed the crowd: "How can anyone satisfy these people with loaves here in the wilderness?" (8:4). Here, again, the disciples express incredulity over the perceived impossibility of Jesus' request.

<sup>102</sup> Tolbert, *Sowing*, 183; L. W. Countryman, "How Many Baskets Full?: Mark 8:14–21 and the Value of Miracles in Mark," *CBQ* 47 (1985): 647–50.

<sup>103</sup> Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 244; France, *Mark*, 308. Cf. Matthew's account where the disciples respond to Jesus in first person (ἡμῶν), not third (τις): "Where in a wilderness are there enough loaves for us to satisfy so great a crowd?" (15:33).

Mark 8:4. Yet, the disciples' incredulity is expressed differently here than in 6:37, and in fact differently here than in any of the other feeding narratives in the canonical gospels. In all the other accounts, the disciples underscore the impossibility of Jesus' request by stressing the amount of resources needed (Matt 15:33; Mark 6:37; John 6:7), the dearth of resources available (Matt 14:17; Luke 9:13; John 6:9), the enormity of the crowd (Matt 15:33; Luke 9:14; John 6:9), or some combination of the three. Surprisingly, none of these descriptors are present in Mark 8:4. The element that comes closest is the reference to the wilderness, which also occurs in the Matthean parallel (15:33). In fact, most commentators—as well as most English translations consulted—construe πόθεν spatially, *where?* (vs. causally, *how?*), and link it with ὧδε and ἐπ' ἐρημίας and so understand the disciples to be questioning Jesus about the likelihood of the wilderness yielding enough bread to satisfy such a large crowd. In other words, their incredulity is occasioned by the perceived practical impossibility of carrying out Jesus' request. According to this reading, the disciples' question in 8:4 expresses the same sentiments and serves the same rhetorical function as their question in 6:37. Yet, this reading, which is so prevalent, misses where the emphasis actually falls in 8:4, upon τούτους not ἐπ' ἐρημίας. In support of this claim, I offer both a negative and a positive argument.

First, let us consider how Matthew has rendered the disciples' question: πόθεν ἡμῖν ἐν ἐρημίᾳ ἄρτοι τοσοῦτοι ὥστε χορτάσαι ὄχλον τοσοῦτον; (15:33), which differs from Mark 8:4 in significant ways (Figure 6–14).

The Feeding of the Four Thousand	
<b>Mk 8:4</b>	πόθεν τούτους δυνήσεται τις ὧδε χορτάσαι ἄρτων ἐπ' ἐρημίας;
<b>Mt 15:33</b>	πόθεν ἡμῖν ἐν ἐρημίᾳ ἄρτοι τοσοῦτοι ὥστε χορτάσαι ὄχλον τοσοῦτον;
<b>Mk 8:4</b>	How can one satisfy these people with loaves here in the wilderness?
<b>Mt 15:33</b>	Where in the wilderness are there enough loaves for us to satisfy so great a crowd?

**Figure 6–14: Horizontal-Line Synopsis of the Mark 8:4 and Matthew 15:33**

In Matthew, ἐρημία has been shifted forward into a much closer proximity to πόθεν. Likewise, ἄρτων has been moved forward and has undergone a grammatical transformation. In Mark, ἄρτων instantiates the Instrument of χορτάσαι, but in Matthew, the genitive ἄρτων has become the nominative ἄρτοι and now instantiates the subject of an implied verb of being. Matthew has replaced τούτους with ὄχλον and, to both ἄρτοι and ὄχλον, has appended the correlative demonstrative pronoun, τοσοῦ-

τοῦς, in order to underscore the amount of resources needed and the size of the crowd, details which, to reiterate, are absent from Mark but present in all the other feeding narratives. According to Davies and Allison, Matthew's revisions merely render "the question a little more concrete."<sup>104</sup> Yet, Matthew's modifications have produced a question that differs in emphasis, if not in meaning and function, from that in Mark. In Matthew, the disciples' question concerns the feasibility of Jesus' request by highlighting their wilderness environ, where they cannot hope to find enough loaves to satisfy such a sizable crowd. By comparison, the wilderness is much less prominent in Mark, which raises the question of whether it contributes as significantly to the disciples' sense of incredulity as commentators and translations suggest.

Instead, in Mark 8:4, τούτους is the focal point not the wilderness setting. First of all, τούτους renders its referent, ὄχλος, "temporarily thematic," the temporary center of attention.<sup>105</sup> That is, the author's employment of a near demonstrative pronoun—versus the use of a personal pronoun or the repetition of the noun, which is Mark's typical strategy and the route Matthew takes here—renders the crowd, "thematically salient."<sup>106</sup> The crowd's thematic saliency is further enhanced through its marked focus, via its having been placed as far forward in the sentence as is grammatically permissible.<sup>107</sup> Stanley E. Porter notes that demonstratives tend to be fronted when nominative,<sup>108</sup> but τούτους is *accusative* and its fronting has been achieved by shifting it from its more natural position in relation to its predicator, immediately before or after χορτάσαι.

Moreover, what is striking about the disciples' question, which bears upon τούτους, is the fact, noted previously, that in contrast to all the other gospel feeding narratives (as well as their OT antecedents), the disciples' question in Mark 8:4 does

---

<sup>104</sup> W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The Gospel according to St. Matthew* (3 vols.; ICC; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 2:571.

<sup>105</sup> Stephen H. Levinsohn. "Towards a Unified Linguistic Description of οὗτος and ἐκεῖνος" (paper presented in the Biblical Greek and Linguistics Section of the annual meeting of the SBL. Atlanta, 2003), n.p. Here, *thematic* refers to the main referent under discussion; see Kathleen Callow, *Discourse Considerations in Translating the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 52–53.

<sup>106</sup> Steven Runge, "Mark 8:4, TOUTOUS" (B-Greek, 12 July 2007), n.p. Online: <http://lists.ibiblio.org/pipermail/b-greek/2007-July/043643.html>. "Mark is *not* given to moving pronominal elements with a fronted focal constituent as are Matthew or Luke or Paul. Much more frequently in Mark one finds that the fronted element is salient, especially when an interrogative pronoun is involved."

<sup>107</sup> In Mark "pronominal elements that follow interrogative pronouns very often prove to be particularly salient in the context," e.g., πρὸς ὑμᾶς, 9:19; με, 10:18 (Runge, "Mark 8:4," n.p.).

<sup>108</sup> Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament* (BLG 2; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 289.

not draw explicit attention to the massiveness of the crowd, the enormous quantity of resources need, or the paucity of resources on hand. Given what seems to be a standard motif in miraculous feeding narratives, one would have expected something more than a simple reference to *these people*, perhaps something like *this many people*, and in fact this is what we find in the other gospels when the crowd is referenced: *so great a crowd* (ὄχλον τοσοῦτον, Matt 15:33); *all these people* (πάντα τὸν λαὸν τοῦτον, Luke 9:13); and *so many people* (τοσοῦτους, John 6:9). Additionally, πόθεν does not concern ἐπ’ ἐρημίας but δυνήσεταιί and so functions causally, not spatially, as in, “How can one satisfy these people with loaves here in a wilderness?”<sup>109</sup> All of this suggests that the wilderness setting plays a relatively minor role in the disciples’ question in comparison with the thematic prominence of τούτους.

In the end, while the disciples still assist Jesus in the distribution of food and the collection of leftovers, absent is any indication of their compassion for the Gentile crowd. In its place is their incredulity about the possibility of satisfying *these people*, yet what exactly it is about *these people* that gives rise to the disciples’ incredulity and occasions their question must wait until more of the narrative context has been established.

#### MARK 6:45–8:21, THE TRAIL OF BREADCRUMBS

##### MARK 6:45–52, THEY DID NOT UNDERSTAND ABOUT THE LOAVES

	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52
ἄρτος								×
συνίημι								×

**Figure 6–15: Members of The Loaves Motif in Mark 6:45–52**

Mark 6:45–52 has already received treatment as a principal carrier of the Sea Crossing motif. Its participation in The Loaves motif stems from its highly-avoidable conclusion, “for they did not understand about the loaves” (6:52a). With this intrusion, the narrator seeks to account for and explain the sequence of failures the disciples experience during the crossing, from their inability to make progress against an adverse wind, through their mistaken identification of Jesus, to their astonishment over

<sup>109</sup> Pace Quesnell, *Mind*, 164. The RSV, NRSV, NKJV, NLT, and ESV translate πόθεν causally.

the wind's abatement,<sup>110</sup> all of which culminate in the disciples failing to reach their intended Gentile destination. Presumably, had the disciples understood about the loaves, their failures would have been avoided and their sea crossing, and subsequent mission, successful.<sup>111</sup>

Yet, it is by no means obvious to the reader what understanding about the loaves means and therefore what exactly the disciples have failed to understand. The reader is, as it were, in the same boat with the disciples for the reader has not yet been given what is necessary for understanding this enigmatic, essentially parabolic explanation, beyond perhaps its having something to do with the prior feeding. As Henderson observes, "In its allusion to 'the loaves,' Mk. 6:52 both hints at the nature of the disciples' misunderstanding *and* refuses to pinpoint exactly what it is that they have failed to grasp."<sup>112</sup> Yet, dotted along the subsequent narrative landscape are clues, a trail of breadcrumbs, if you will, that guides the reader toward what it means to understand about the loaves and thus what underlies the disciples' failures and incomprehension.

Various proposals have been put forward to explain what exactly the disciples have not understood. Most commentators assume that *the loaves* is shorthand for the Jewish feeding as a whole and conclude that the disciples have not understood its significance. For example, Boucher argues that the disciples "ought to have perceived in the feeding the repetition of the miracle of the manna,"<sup>113</sup> which signified the inauguration of the New Exodus and so revealed Jesus to be a prophet greater than Moses.

On this interpretation, the second miracle [i.e., walking upon the sea] comes as a fitting climax to the first [i.e., F5000]. Both disclose who Jesus is: the first is a veiled revelation, given to the disciples and the crowd; the second an epiphany, given to the disciples alone. Had the disciples penetrated the mystery of the first, they would not have been utterly confounded at the demonstration of Jesus' power and glory in the second.<sup>114</sup>

---

<sup>110</sup> Here, the *γὰρ* clause is taken understood as a collective explanation identifying the underlying cause for all of the disciples' failures within the episode. Similarly, Dwyer, *Motif*, 133–34; Kenzo Tagawa, *Miracles et Evangile* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966), 115–16 (cited by Dwyer); Young, *Subversive Symmetry*, 133–34, 147–48.

<sup>111</sup> LaVerdiere, *Beginning*, 1:185.

<sup>112</sup> Henderson, *Christology and Discipleship*, 206.

<sup>113</sup> Boucher, *Mysterious Parable*, 74.

<sup>114</sup> Boucher, *Mysterious Parable*, 74.

Even if Boucher's interpretation of the feeding's significance is granted, it still is unclear how her conclusions logically follow. Why would the disciples' failure to penetrate a veiled (i.e., a more opaque) form of revelation result in their failure to penetrate an epiphanic (i.e., a more transparent) form of revelation?

Another weakness, and one shared by a number of commentators, is what Henderson describes as "a critical, though not yet sufficiently examined, presupposition: the notion that what the disciples have misunderstood concerns the identity of Jesus."<sup>115</sup> Here, Henderson does not dismiss Jesus' central role in the feeding but offers a corrective balance by highlighting the prominent role played by the disciples, which is in keeping with their increasing prominence in the narrative as a whole. For Henderson, the disciples' collapse lies in their failure to exercise the authority Jesus had entrusted to them. What the disciples should have understood about the loaves (i.e., the feeding) was their own role in Jesus' mission. "They did not understand that, just as Jesus had empowered them to distribute the loaves in his eschatological feeding enterprise, so now Jesus expected them to 'go ahead to the other side,' fully trusting in and authorized to claim God's dominion over the sea."<sup>116</sup> Henderson's proposal scores over most others in two important respects. First, she does not unreflectively assume *the loaves* to be a metonymic reference for the Jewish feeding but entertains the possibility that *the loaves* has a more specific referent, namely, the disciples' role in the Jewish feeding. Second, her interpretation takes into consideration the intended purpose of the sea crossing, a second sending forth of the disciples, although, as we have seen, she misunderstands its purpose as simply an opportunity to exercise their exorcistic authority instead of as a sending forth on an apostolic Gentile mission.

Another shortcoming of many treatments of 6:52 is their failure to look beyond the feeding and the sea crossing. Yet, as Quesnell observes, "Working only from the immediate context of the pericope and of the preceding pericope to which the verse itself refers has not given a satisfactory meaning for 6,52. . . . [I]t is necessary to move to a wider context."<sup>117</sup> Quesnell's most important contribution on this issue is the attention he gives to the other episodes within the Markan redaction, especially those where the language of perception and loaves recurs. Quesnell himself offers a

---

<sup>115</sup> Henderson, *Christology and Discipleship*, 207.

<sup>116</sup> Henderson, *Christology and Discipleship*, 233.

<sup>117</sup> Quesnell, *Mind*, 68.



eucharistic interpretation of the feedings and therefore of *the loaves*. For Quesnell, Mark intends the (broken) loaves to point to the mystery of Jesus' death, resurrection, and future coming, as symbolized in Christian eucharistic practices, which Mark's readers would have been familiar with and been evoked by Jesus' words and actions in the feedings. A eucharistic interpretation is also advocated by other scholars.<sup>118</sup> So, given the verbal parallels between the Last Supper and the two feedings, Bassler argues that "on some inchoate level the loaves [refer] to Jesus' broken body on the cross."<sup>119</sup> The main problem with eucharistic interpretations is that they do not actually explain what the disciples have not understood for there is no way that the disciples, as characters within the story, could know that the feedings, let alone the loaves, carry eucharistic connotations; in other words, eucharistic interpretations abandon the narrative's story in favor of its discourse. Instead of explaining what the *disciples* have failed to understand, Quesnell's and Bassler's eucharistic interpretations explain only what the *reader* is expected to understand about *the loaves* via the disciples' failure.<sup>120</sup> Thus, the following discussion focuses upon what the disciples as *characters* have failed to understand about the loaves, which first entails establishing what *the loaves* in 6:52 refers to.

### *The Referent of "the Loaves"*

Ultimately, the referent of *the loaves* in 6:52 cannot be established independent of a determination of what it means to (not) understand about the loaves. What follows, then, is a proposal for the referent of *the loaves*, the validity of which will be confirmed by its ability to facilitate our interpretation of the Markan narrative.

As noted earlier, most commentators assume *the loaves* in 6:52 to be a cipher for the Jewish feeding as a whole or what feeding symbolizes, without entertaining the possibility that it might have a more specific referent. Certainly the narrator's reference to *the loaves* evokes the Jewish feeding, but the question remains, does it evoke the feeding via a particular referent bound up with the feeding? Given their

---

<sup>118</sup> E.g., Jerry Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel: Text and Subtext* (SNTSMS 72; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 146–47, 151; Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 215–16; Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 434. Fowler offers a detailed critique of eucharistic interpretations (*Loaves and Fishes*, 138–47).

<sup>119</sup> Bassler, "Parable of the Loaves," 168.

<sup>120</sup> Actually, both Quesnell and Bassler readily acknowledge this. Unfortunately, many who interpret the feedings and the loaves eucharistically unwittingly confuse story and discourse.

prominence within the feeding episode, the most obvious candidate is the five loaves which Jesus feeds the crowd with, yet throughout the remainder of the Sea Crossing movement the evidence points to the baskets of leftovers as the referent of *the loaves*.

The first place to consider is ESC<sup>3</sup>, the only other episode in Mark where the language of not understanding, hardness of heart, and loaves coincides. In 8:16, occasioned by Jesus' leaven warnings, the disciples discuss not having loaves, and Jesus responds with a battery of rebuking questions beginning with, οὐπω νοεῖτε οὐδὲ συνίετε; πεπωρωμένην ἔχετε τὴν καρδίαν ὑμῶν; (8:17). So, what have the disciples not understood now? In order to answer this question, I begin with some insights offered via Construction Grammar. Συνίημι is a two-place predicator that requires Experiencer and Topic arguments for grammatical meaning.<sup>121</sup> In 8:17, the disciples instantiate the Experiencer, while the Topic is implied as a DNC and so must be supplied from the context. Initially, the reader might be inclined to regard the leaven parable as the implied Topic of συνίετε, given its proximity to συνίετε and the fact that previous occurrences of συνίημι are always associated with parables.<sup>122</sup> Yet the presence of οὐπω counts against this; Jesus' asking, "Do you *not* yet . . . understand?," makes little sense if it refers to something he has just told them.<sup>123</sup> Thus, the reader must consider other possibilities. Given the unique verbal parallels between 8:17 and 6:52 (Figure 6–16) along with the striking character of 6:52, which so strongly impresses itself upon the reader, the most likely referent for the Topic of συνίημι is ἐπὶ τοῖς ἄρτοις, as in 6:52,<sup>124</sup> which fits with ἄρτος's general prominence throughout the episode.

<b>6:52a</b>	<u>οὐ γὰρ συνῆκαν ἐπὶ τοῖς ἄρτοις,</u>
<b>8:17b</b>	<u>οὐπω νοεῖτε οὐδὲ συνίετε;</u>
<b>6:52b</b>	<u>ἀλλ' ἦν αὐτῶν ἡ καρδία πεπωρωμένη.</u>
<b>8:17c</b>	<u>πεπωρωμένην ἔχετε τὴν καρδίαν ὑμῶν;</u>

**Figure 6–16: Horizontal-Line Synopsis of the Mark 6:52 and 8:17**

<sup>121</sup> Danove, *Linguistics*, 210.

<sup>122</sup> Mark 4:12; 6:52; and 7:14. Also cf. ἀσύνετος in 7:18. Here, I am treating the narrator's explanation in 6:52a as functioning as a parable in Mark's narrative, the parable of the loaves, if you will.

<sup>123</sup> Note the absence of οὐπω on the two other occasions where Jesus chastises the disciples for not understanding a parable he has just told them (4:13; 7:18).

<sup>124</sup> So also Bassler, "Parable of the Loaves," 163; Svartvik, *Mark and Mission*, 295.

Thus, Jesus' rebuke should be read as follows: "Why are you discussing not having loaves? Do you not yet perceive nor understand *about the loaves*? Has your heart become hardened?"

Just like ESC<sup>2</sup>, ESC<sup>3</sup> highlights the disciples' not understanding about the loaves and in so doing points to the most likely referent of *the loaves*. Notice that Jesus' questions, which begin with asking whether the disciples still have not understood *about the loaves*, climax with Jesus inquiring into certain details of the feedings:

"Do you not remember when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand; how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?" They said to him, "Twelve." "And the seven for the four thousand; how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" And they said to him, "Seven." And he was saying to them, Do you not yet understand [about the loaves]?" (Mark 8:18b–21).

Here, it is critical to notice where exactly the emphasis lies. Jesus himself supplies the numbers of the initial loaves and of the people fed, but asks his disciples to supply the number of baskets of loaves leftover from each feeding.<sup>125</sup> That is, Jesus is attempting to break through the disciples' hardness of heart and non-understanding, not simply by recalling the two feedings in general but by drawing their attention to the leftover loaves in particular and then repeating the all-important question, "Do you not yet understand [*about the loaves*]?" (8:21). This, I propose, indicates that in 6:52, *the loaves*, while clearly evoking the Jewish feeding, refers specifically to the leftover loaves from that feeding. By the time the narrative reaches ESC<sup>3</sup>, *the loaves*, when instantiating the Topic of συνίημι, also refers to the loaves leftover from the Gentile feeding.

Having established a referent for *the loaves* in 6:52, we can now say that there was something symbolized in the leftover loaves from the Jewish feeding that the disciples did not understand due to their hardening hearts and that underlies their failures during ESC<sup>2</sup>. Yet, identifying the referent is just the first step in solving the riddle of *the loaves*. We must now follow the trail of bread crumbs leading from ESC<sup>2</sup> to ESC<sup>3</sup>, seeking to understand what exactly the disciples have failed to understand.

---

<sup>125</sup> Notice also that only the loaves are in view, not the fish.

	1	2	3	4	5	...	14	...	23
ἐσθίω		×			×				
ἄρτος		×			×				
συνίημι							×		

Figure 6–17: Members of The Loaves Motif in Mark 7:1–23

Soon after arriving at Gennesaret, Jesus finds himself embroiled in yet another debate occasioned by the eating practices of his disciples (cf. 2:23–28). The Pharisees and scribes cross-examine Jesus, accusing his disciples of transgressing the tradition of the elders due to their eating *the loaves* (7:2; *the loaf* in 7:5) with unclean hands. Jesus responds first by criticizing their *human traditions*, which often subvert the commandments of God (7:6–13), and then by addressing the crowd with a parable on what does and does not defile a person (7:14–15), which he privately explains to his disciples (7:17–23). In this episode, the five elements of The Loaves associational cluster are linked to the opponents’ initial accusation and to Jesus’ purity parable. In 7:2 and 7:5, ἄρτος operates exclusively on the discourse plane of the narrative,<sup>126</sup> drawing 7:1–23 into the breadcrumb trail and establishing the rhetorical backdrop against which the meaning and significance of Jesus’ purity parable is to be understood.

In 7:14–15, Jesus says to the crowd, “Listen to me all of you and *understand* (σύνετε; cf. 4:12). There is nothing outside a person that going into them is able to make them unclean, but those things that come out of a person are the things that make them unclean.” In explaining this parable to his disciples, Jesus argues that nothing entering a person from the outside can defile them because it enters the stomach and not the heart; only what comes out of a person’s heart is able to make them unclean (7:18–20). In other words, purity and impurity are internal matters of the heart, quite detached from such external matters as what and how one eats. The implication, according to the narrator, is that, in saying this, Jesus has thereby *rendered all foods clean* (καθαρίζων πάντα τὰ βρώματα, 7:19c).<sup>127</sup> That is, “in Mark’s view Jesus’ saying

<sup>126</sup> See the earlier discussion on the avoidability of ἄρτος in 7:2 and 7:5.

<sup>127</sup> “The awkward masculine καθαρίζων is to be interpreted as a participle of manner agreeing with the subject of λέγει in v.18a, and the whole phrase as a typical Markan parenthesis which draws out the implications of what has been stated” (Banks, *Jesus and the Law*, 144); so also, Christian Stettler, “Purity of Heart in Jesus’ Teaching: Mark 7:14–23 Par. as an Expression of Jesus’ *Basileia* Ethics,” *JTS* 55 (2004): 477n51.

about purity in 7:15 is a performative pronouncement, one that *accomplishes* the purification it announces.”<sup>128</sup> In short, Jesus renders all OT food laws obsolete.<sup>129</sup> But why?

In his argument to establish the authenticity of Mark 7:14–23 par., Christian Stettler summarizes Jesus’ attitude toward OT law in three points. First, “Jesus *establishes priorities* within the law,”<sup>130</sup> as when he distinguishes between the weightier and less significant matters of the law (Matt 23:23). Second, “Jesus *intensifies* commandments of the Torah,”<sup>131</sup> as in the Sermon on the Mount where he broadens the categories of what constitutes killing and adultery (Matt 5:21–30). Third, “Jesus *repeals* commandments of the Torah when they stand in the way of . . . unrestricted obedience to God,”<sup>132</sup> as in Jesus’ revocation of the Mosaic commandment permitting divorce because it allows people to subvert God’s intentions for marriage (Mark 10:2–12; Matt 5:31–32). Stettler concludes that Jesus’ purity parable and explanation fit this general picture of Jesus’ attitude toward OT law, especially the third point (which supports the parable’s authenticity). But, this raises a question. In Mark, what is Jesus’ rationale for abolishing the Torah’s purity legislation?

Why does he not merely define the purity law as less important than other parts of the Torah, as the Old Testament prophetic critique of the cult had done and as many representatives of Hellenistic Judaism did at his time? The purity Torah does not seem to belong to those commandments that were an obstacle to the all-embracing validity of God’s will. “In no way is the abrogation of dietary restrictions in the interest of a higher morality. The teaching that what comes out of a person’s heart . . . defiles . . . is not dependant on the claim that no food defiles.”<sup>133</sup> Why then does Jesus give the one as the reason for the other?<sup>134</sup>

---

<sup>128</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 457.

<sup>129</sup> According to Svartvik, this has been a common interpretation of 7:15 and 7:19c (*Mark and Mission*, 3–8), although Stettler thinks Svartvik has overstated its current popularity (“Purity of Heart,” 468). Crossley challenges this reading, arguing that Jesus does not abrogate food laws because Jesus does not declare *all* foods clean in an absolute sense. Instead, Jesus declares “all foods *that are permitted to eat in the Torah* to be clean” and simply denies the necessity of handwashing. Thus, prohibited foods are still prohibited (James G. Crossley, *The Date of Mark’s Gospel: Insight from the Law in Earliest Christianity* [JSNTSup 266; London: T&T Clark, 2004], 192; so also Svartvik, *Mark and Mission*, 403). Unfortunately, space does not allow interaction with their arguments. In what follows, the position recently defended by Stettler has been adopted, namely, that Jesus’ purity parable in Mark (*and in Matthew*) is to be read absolutely as Jesus’ abrogation of OT food laws.

<sup>130</sup> Stettler, “Purity,” 485.

<sup>131</sup> Stettler, “Purity,” 485.

<sup>132</sup> Stettler, “Purity,” 485.

<sup>133</sup> Quoting A. Watson, *Jesus and the Law* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 64.

<sup>134</sup> Stettler, “Purity,” 488.

In other words, if Jesus wanted to emphasize inward purity (*vis-à-vis* outward purity), he could have done so without abolishing the food laws. Given the various ways in which Jesus' attitude toward the law was expressed—prioritization, intensification, and revocation—Jesus' abrogation of OT food laws implies that they somehow restrict unrestricted obedience to God. This finds support in that just prior to presenting his purity parable, Jesus criticizes adhering to the tradition of the elders claiming that such adherence to human traditions often prohibits obedience to God, the practice of Corban being just one example (7:10–13).

In Mark, Jesus abolishes the God-given kosher regulations because they no longer serve God's purposes. In Leviticus 20:24–26, Israel is commanded to make distinctions between clean and unclean animals because YHWH has so distinguished Israel from the nations. The kosher laws thus served as a sort of sacrament, an outward and visible sign of Israel's election, identity and vocation, a practice that established, protected, and maintained the very distinctions that it symbolized. Consequently, by abrogating these regulations, Jesus eliminates a defining quality of Jewish ethnic, religious, and social identity, which separated Jews from Gentiles, thereby opening the door for Gentile inclusion in God's kingdom. The implication is that, if Jesus has rendered all foods clean, then Jews are no longer to make distinctions between clean and unclean foods, and thus there is no longer any symbolic rationale or praxis for classifying Gentiles as unclean and so outside God's salvific designs. On a practical level, if all foods are now clean, Jesus' Jewish disciples can, in good conscience, accept the hospitality of Gentiles to whom they are sent on apostolic mission.<sup>135</sup>

This reading of 7:1–23 contributes to the ongoing question of the authority, and thus the identity, of the Markan Jesus. The absoluteness of the purity parable speaks of an authority outstripping that of Moses and the Torah and thus comparable to that of Israel's God. Jesus' authoritative pronouncements on what does and does not defile is reminiscent of his earlier pronouncements as the authoritative Son of Man (2:10; 2:27–28), especially about the sabbath, (2:27–28). This is to be expected given the number of formal similarities between that and this episodes. In both, Jesus is questioned ostensibly about his disciples' eating practices but in reality about his prerogative in allowing such blatant disregard for Torah and the tradition of the eld-

---

<sup>135</sup> It is possible that Jesus' missionary instructions in Luke 10:8, "Eat what is set before you," is intended to address this same concern.

ers. Ironically, even as Jesus criticizes the Pharisees for elevating human traditions above the word of God, in declaring all foods clean, Jesus himself actually obsoletes God's word. According to Stettler, Jesus' attitude toward the Torah is unattested and unprecedented in his day; it can only be explained on the basis of "his awareness of his own authority and his awareness of a new epoch in redemptive history."<sup>136</sup> It is Jesus' understanding of the nature and purposes of the kingdom of God and of his own role in inaugurating that kingdom that gives him the freedom to approach God's law as he does. According to Mark, then, Jesus abolishes the OT food laws because they restrict the disciples' unrestricted obedience to God, by inhibiting them from fulfilling their divine calling to become fishers of people, a calling which includes casting their nets into Gentile waters. With the advent of the eschatological reign of God, fresh wineskins are needed (2:22).<sup>137</sup>

#### MARK 7:24–30, THE LOAF OF THE CHILDREN

	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
χορτάζω				×			
ἄρτος				×			
ἐσθίω					×		
ψυχίον					×		

**Figure 6–18: Members of The Loaves Motif in Mark 7:24–30**

In rendering all foods clean, Jesus eliminated one obstacle that, from a narrative perspective, would account for the disciples' unwillingness and/or inability to engage in Gentile mission; in Mark 7:24–30, another potential obstacle comes to light. In 7:24, Jesus withdraws to the Gentile region of Tyre. Jesus enters a house in an unsuccessful attempt to remain hidden, as he is immediately accosted by an unnamed woman of Gentile ethnicity who is seeking healing for her demon-possessed daughter. Arguably one of the more intriguing episodes in Mark, 7:24–30 presents a potential problem for my developing reading of the Markan narrative. How, for example, can it be maintained that Jesus forces his disciples to embark on a Gentile mission in 6:45

<sup>136</sup> Stettler, "Purity," 486.

<sup>137</sup> Interestingly, Jesus' comment about new wineskins belongs to the one other episode in Mark where he defends the eating habits of his disciples.

when later he “appears reluctant”<sup>138</sup> to grant a request for healing on the grounds that the supplicant is a Gentile. Here, the operative word is *appears*.

That Jesus’ uncharacteristic response to the Syrophoenician woman’s request is occasioned by her non-Jewish ethnicity is fairly straightforward.<sup>139</sup> The woman is *explicitly* identified as a Gentile, and such explicit identification is unusual in Mark.<sup>140</sup> Her ethnicity is emphasized by means of a two-step progression; she is a (1) Ἑλληνίς, (2) Συροφοινίκισσα τῷ γένει, (7:26a). Moreover, Jesus’ response takes the form of a parable, “an allegorical riddle,”<sup>141</sup> in which *the dogs*, who are clearly Gentiles, are denied food precisely because they are dogs and not children.

On the other hand, that Jesus’ uncharacteristic response constitutes a rebuff of the woman’s request is not so straightforward. Certainly, there are elements that imply a refusal to heal the woman’s daughter. First, Jesus does not immediately consent to the woman’s request, which is what the reader has come to expect. Prior to this episode, Jesus has not once refused a request for healing (1:40; 2:5; 5:23) nor does he subsequent to this episode (7:32; 8:22; 9:22; 10:47–48, 51). Second, Jesus responds with a form of speech that is reserved for outsiders (4:11, 33–34) and through which he unflatteringly and offensively categorizes this Gentile woman and her daughter as unclean, scavenging dogs.<sup>142</sup>

Yet, despite these obviously negative features, there are reasons to question the initial impression that Jesus rejects this woman’s request. First, if Jesus were refusing to heal her daughter because of her Gentile ethnicity, this would contradict his earlier willingness “to extend the blessings of the kingdom to the Gentiles” (3:7–12; 5:1–20)<sup>143</sup> and would “discount the building significance of the section as a whole,<sup>144</sup> each story of which in one way or another reaffirms the extension of salvation to the Gentiles.”<sup>145</sup> Second, if Jesus’ response were actually a refusal to heal, his eventual

---

<sup>138</sup> Miller, *Women*, 90.

<sup>139</sup> Miller, *Women*, 97.

<sup>140</sup> “Mark uses a variety of means to convey cultural information, and only occasionally is it communicated by direct reference (7.26; 10.33, 42)” (Iverson, *Gentiles*, 46).

<sup>141</sup> Rhoads, “Syrophoenician Woman,” 355.

<sup>142</sup> J. Duncan M. Derrett, “Law in the New Testament: The Syro-Phoenician Woman and the Centurion of Capernaum,” *NovT* 15 (1973): 165; Iverson, *Gentiles*, 48. Gerd Theissen, *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition* (trans. Linda M. Maloney; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 62.

<sup>143</sup> Iverson, *Gentiles*, 49.

<sup>144</sup> I.e., Mark 6:1–8:30.

<sup>145</sup> Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony*, 150.



exorcism of the girl's demon, seemingly occasioned by her mother's witty rejoinder (7:28), would mean that she has changed Jesus' mind about the place of Gentiles. This interpretation has become increasingly popular,<sup>146</sup> and while it might find some justification on historical grounds,<sup>147</sup> it is fundamentally at odds with the narrative's ideological and evaluative viewpoints of Jesus. It implies that Jesus' attitudes towards Gentiles are inadequate, mistaken, and in need of correction; yet, from the narrator's perspective, Jesus—who has been anointed by God's Spirit, has God's unqualified approval—is the one character who *always* thinks and does the things of God. Jesus is never in need of correction; thus, interpreting his initial response as a refusal to heal cuts against the grain of the narrative's rhetoric and the implied reader's expectations.

Throughout Mark, the implied author employs repetition to guide the implied reader and elicit particular responses. Repetition conditions the reading experience by fostering certain expectations that are eventually fulfilled or go unfulfilled. In particular, repetition with variation often serves to highlight what is fundamental to the interpretation of the narrative. In this scene, Jesus' response is completely out of character and so contrary to what the reader has come to expect that the surprise, the shock, and the questions it occasions are the first indications that more is going on than meets the eye. Yet, if Jesus' response is not a refusal, how is it to be understood? What conclusions is the implied reader expected to draw from this atypical exchange between Jesus and this unnamed woman? In answering these questions, there are three important elements to consider: the parabolic form in which the exchange occurs, the fact that it centers upon bread, and the fact that it is ironic.

### *The Exchange as Parabolic*

In Mark 4:10, when the disciples inquire about the parable of the sower and the soils, Jesus first responds with questions, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?" (4:13); he then proceeds to offer an allegorical interpretation. This parable and its interpretation are paradigmatic, informing the Markan reader that Jesus' parables are allegorical and thus require allegorical inter-

---

<sup>146</sup> So, Joanna Dewey, "Jesus' Healings of Women: Conformity and Non-Conformity to Dominant Cultural Values as Clues for Historical Reconstruction," *BTB* 24 (1995): 189; Rhoads, "Syrophenician Woman," 361–63. For additional bibliography, see Miller, *Women*, 90.

<sup>147</sup> So Theissen who attempts to account for Jesus' response by investigating the historical relationship of Jews and Gentiles in the border regions of Tyre and Galilee (*Gospels in Context*, 61–80).

pretations. Whether Jesus' parables ever functioned allegorically within their original, historical contexts is a debated issue, but in Mark

the parables are consistently allegories which, like riddles, have to be deciphered in order to be understood. In every case, the Markan parables are allegories in which Jesus is explaining to other characters what is going on around them in the story world.<sup>148</sup>

In 7:27, Jesus responds to the woman's request for healing with a parable, "Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not good to take the loaf of the children and throw it to the dogs" (7:27). In this "carefully crafted allegory,"<sup>149</sup> the *children* denote the Jewish people, the *dogs* Gentiles, and the *loaf* the blessings of God's kingdom. Thus, Jesus construes this woman's petition for the healing of her Gentile daughter as a plea to partake of and participate in the salvific blessings and benefits that belong to God's chosen people. The parable asserts the Jews' privileged priority with respect to God's blessings of salvation but stops short of denying these to Gentiles. Instead, before the Gentiles can partake of God's blessings, the Jews must first be satisfied. To do otherwise would deprive them of their rightful inheritance; it would amount to taking bread away from children and feeding it to scavenging dogs.

The Syrophoenician woman responds with her own carefully constructed allegory, "Lord, even the dogs under the table are eating from the children's crumbs" (7:28), making her the only Markan character other than Jesus to speak in parables. Significantly, the woman neither objects to Jesus' designation of Gentiles as τὰ κυνάρια nor challenges their secondary status. She accepts the appellation but modifies its semantic frame so that it evokes a different connotation. Being repositioned under the table (ὑποκάτω τῆς τραπέζης),<sup>150</sup> τὰ κυνάρια no longer denotes the unclean, scavenging dogs of Jewish culture but the domesticated, household pets of Greek culture.<sup>151</sup> She accepts the priority of the Jews in the economy of God's salvation even while offering an alternative timetable that more closely aligns with the actual realities, for the dogs *are eating*<sup>152</sup> from the children's crumbs. In other words, she maintains that Gentiles have already begun to participate in Israel's blessings (e.g., 3:8; 5:1–20).

---

<sup>148</sup> Rhoads, "Syrophoenician Woman," 355.

<sup>149</sup> Rhoads, "Syrophoenician Woman," 355.

<sup>150</sup> Iverson, *Gentiles*, 54.

<sup>151</sup> Francis Dufton, "The Syrophoenician Woman and Her Dogs," *ExpTim* 100 (1989): 417.

<sup>152</sup> Notice the woman's use of the present tense (ἐσθίουσιν, 7:28), which stands in marked contrast to the multiple aorist tenses used by Jesus (ἄφες, χορτασθῆναι, λαβεῖν, βαλεῖν, 7:27).

### *The Exchange as Centered upon Bread*

At the center of this parabolic exchange stands bread, making it the fourth episode in the last five to be located along the trail of breadcrumbs. Here, Jesus allegorizes the woman's request for healing as the children's *loaf* (ἄρτος, 7:27) while the woman allegorizes it merely as their *crumbs* (ψυχίων, 7:28). In replacing Jesus' ἄρτος with ψυχίων, the Syrophoenician clarifies her initial request. She is not asking for the children's loaf as such; that is, she is not asking that God's blessings be taken away from the Jews and given to the Gentiles. She is only asking that her daughter be permitted to sample the leftovers from God's abundant blessings to Israel; she is only asking for the crumbs that the children have let fall from the table, which she regards as entirely sufficient for her needs.<sup>153</sup> Here again, the woman exhibits her willing acceptance of Jewish precedence in the economy of God's salvation while at the same time positing an alternative, albeit compatible, scenario to Jesus'. "In her response, the Syrophoenician woman extends Jesus' riddle. She does not oppose what Jesus has said. Rather, she develops the scenario of Jesus' allegory so that she and her daughter have a place in it."<sup>154</sup>

To the woman's parabolic parry and riposte, Jesus offers not another parabolic thrust but a plainly-stated concession, "On account of this word, go; the demon has left your daughter" (7:29). Here, Jesus' words are reminiscent of those he spoke to the hemorrhaging woman, with whom the Syrophoenician woman shares much in common,<sup>155</sup> "Daughter, your faith has saved you; go in peace and be healed of your disease" (5:34). In both cases, the healing each woman seeks is granted on the basis of their respective interactions with Jesus, with one fundamental difference: Jesus attributes faith to the hemorrhaging woman but *not* to the Syrophoenician woman. This distinction is critical to a proper narrative reading of this exchange. While the Syrophoenician woman can be extolled as a model of faith,<sup>156</sup> it is her *insight* that Jesus finds commendable, which is why he cites her *word* (τοῦτον τὸν λόγον, 7:29) and not her faith. Moreover, the word she speaks, which Jesus commends, concerns the

---

<sup>153</sup> Williams, *Other Followers*, 120–21. In the end, the woman's conviction as to the sufficiency of the crumbs is vindicated for her daughter's salvation is as complete and miraculous as anything experienced by Jews thus far, despite the fact that Jesus issues no command, never touches the girl, and, in fact, is not even in her presence.

<sup>154</sup> Rhoads, "Syrophoenician Woman," 357.

<sup>155</sup> These similarities will be discussed below.

<sup>156</sup> So Iverson, *Gentiles*, 55–56; Marshall, *Faith*, 228–29; Rhoads, "Syrophoenician Woman," 356.

children's *loaf* and its *crumbs*. Implicit in the narrative, then, is Jesus commending the Syrophoenician woman *for understanding about the loaves*, which places her in marked contrast to the disciples who thus far do not (6:52; 7:18).

Yet, what is it that she understands about the loaves, i.e., the leftovers from the Jewish feeding? Specifically, she understands that the children's loaf is more than adequate to satisfy the needs of both the children and the dogs. In other words, she perceives in Jesus' mission to the Jews an overabundance in God's blessings, a surplus of God's salvific benefits, *which is intended for the Gentiles*. Rhetorically speaking, the woman recognizes the implications of their being baskets of "crumbs" leftover from the Jewish feeding, implications the disciples have failed to discern. I say *rhetorically speaking* for, as a character within the narrative's story world, it is doubtful that this Tyrian woman is aware of what transpired during the Jewish feeding, let alone its implications. Instead her insight, which for the Markan author amounts to understanding about the loaves vis-à-vis the disciples, is based upon other evidence. According to 7:25, the Syrophoenician woman comes to Jesus because she has heard about him; Jesus' reputation has preceded him. Perhaps she is aware of the stories of other Gentiles from her region who were among those healed alongside Jews in 3:7–12. Thus, in coming to Jesus she understands that Gentiles have a place in God's kingdom, yet, as her response to Jesus makes clear, she understands that any benefits the Gentiles receive through Jesus come as a result of the overabundance of God's blessings to Israel. In short, the Syrophoenician woman understands the surplus of God's salvation and its implications for Gentiles; the disciples do not. Despite having taken up twelve basketfuls of *the children's crumbs* and then immediately afterward having been sent forth on a mission to *the dogs*, the disciples demonstrate, through their various maritime failures in ESC<sup>2</sup>, that they do not understand that the presence of leftover loaves points to the eschatological abundance of God's salvation, which in turn indicates that the good news of the kingdom that Jesus offers Israel is also intended for those beyond Israel's religious and ethnic borders. Due to their hardness of heart, the disciples have blinded themselves to the fact that, as stewards of God's salvation, they are being commissioned and prepared by Jesus to proclaim the gospel to Jews *and* Gentiles, that, as fishers of human beings, they have been called to take the children's crumbs to the dogs.

### *The Exchange as Ironic*

That a minor character, like the Syrophoenician woman, exhibits qualities Jesus' own disciples are expected to exhibit but do not is characteristic of Mark's rhetorical strategy and contributes to the narrative's irony. In his study of minor characters, Joel F. Williams states that in the Sea Crossing movement,<sup>157</sup> "minor characters begin to serve as foils for the disciples. Their response to Jesus serves as a contrast to the response of the disciples, since these minor characters exemplify faith and understanding."<sup>158</sup> Specifically, the Syrophoenician woman exhibits qualities that the disciples lacked during their most recent ESC, for which there is a narrative antecedent.

In 5:21–43, the two minor characters, Jairus and the hemorrhaging woman, exhibit the faith and courage that the disciples lacked during their most recent ESC. In ESC<sup>1</sup>, Jesus asks the disciples, "Why are you fearful? Have you still no *faith* (πίστιν, 4:40)?" Intriguingly, the next time πίστις occurs in the narrative is in Jesus' words to the hemorrhaging woman, "Daughter, *your faith* has saved you (ἡ πίστις σου, 5:34)." Moreover, whereas in ESC<sup>1</sup>, the disciples *feared a great fear* (ἐφοβήθησαν φόβον μέγαν, 4:41), Jesus says to Jairus, "Do not *fear*; only *believe* (φοβοῦ . . . πίστευε, 5:36), which he does. Thus, the rhetorical strategy the author uses to contrast the minor characters in 5:21–43 with the disciples in ESC<sup>1</sup> in terms of *faith* establishes a precedence for the contrast between the Syrophoenician woman in 7:24–30 and the disciples in ESC<sup>2</sup>, although this time, in terms of *understanding*.

That the second employment of this strategy intentionally parallels the first finds support not only in the similarities that exist between ESC<sup>2</sup> and ESC<sup>1</sup> (vis-à-vis ESC<sup>3</sup>) but in those that obtain between 7:24–30 and 5:21–43, especially the verbal parallels shared exclusively by these two episodes. For example, in terms of characterization, the Syrophoenician woman appears as a composite of Jairus and the hemorrhaging woman (Figure 6–19). Like Jairus, the Syrophoenician woman is a parent who is seeking healing for her *little daughter* (7:25; 5:23) and who *comes* to Jesus and *falls down at his feet* (7:25; 5:22). Similarly, after her own healing the hemorrhaging woman *falls down before him* (5:33). Like the hemorrhaging woman, the Syrophoenician woman transgresses religious and social boundaries to come to Jesus on account

---

<sup>157</sup> For Williams, 4:1–8:21.

<sup>158</sup> Williams, *Other Followers*, 105.

of her having *heard about him* (7:25; 5:27), and Jesus concludes his interaction with each, sending them on their way with, “Go . . . (5:34; 7:29).”<sup>159</sup>

<b>7:25b</b>	ἥς εἶχεν τὸ θυγάτριον αὐτῆς πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον
<b>5:23b</b>	τὸ θυγάτριόν μου ἐσχάτως ἔχει
<b>7:25c</b>	ἔλθοῦσα προσέπεσεν πρὸς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ
<b>5:22ac</b>	ἔρχεται . . . πίπτει πρὸς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ
<b>5:33</b>	ἦλθεν καὶ προσέπεσεν αὐτῷ
<b>7:25a</b>	ἀλλ’ εὐθὺς ἀκούσασα γυνὴ περὶ αὐτοῦ
<b>5:27</b>	ἀκούσασα περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ
<b>7:29a</b>	καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ· διὰ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ὑπάγε . . . θυγατρός σου
<b>5:34a</b>	ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῇ· θυγάτηρ, ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε· ὑπάγε . . .

**Figure 6–19: Horizontal-Line Synopsis of Mark 7:24–30 and 5:21–43**

Jesus’ initial response also contributes to the ironic quality of this episode. Those who interpret Jesus’ initial response to the woman as a refusal to heal have missed its obvious irony. As Jerry Camery-Hoggatt observes,

To read only what lies “on the surface of it” is to misread it. It is instead to be read as a bit of tongue-in-cheek. This is irony of a special kind. . . . it is peirastic irony. . . . a form of verbal challenge intended to test the other’s response. It may in fact declare the opposite of the speaker’s actual intention.<sup>160</sup>

Here, I would simply take Camery-Hoggatt’s insight one step further and suggest not only that Jesus’ response does not represent his own views but that it actually represents the views of another party; that is, if Jesus’ response is a test, it is not an arbitrary one. Given that the woman’s witty rejoinder demonstrates her understanding what the disciples have so far failed to understand about the loaves, it stands to reason that the position Jesus adopts for the purpose of this verbal challenge is one that represents the views of the Markan disciples.<sup>161</sup> Thus, by means of Jesus’ out-of-

<sup>159</sup> Jesus’ command to go is the one element identified here that is not *exclusively* shared between these two episodes.

<sup>160</sup> Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony*, 150.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. LaVerdiere, *Beginning*, 1:202; “Elsewhere in Mk the disciples ask the seemingly dense questions and the Markan Jesus answers, but here the protagonist is put in the place of the disciples—who are absent in this pericope—and the foreign woman utters the right word at the right time” (Svartvik, *Mark and Mission*, 300; For Moloney, Jesus’ response “articulates the position of some in the Markan community who would prefer to limit the Christian community, *and its table*, to Jews (*Mark*, 148), which accords with my interpretation of Jesus’ response as ironic. Moloney’s reading, however, works for Matthew but not for Mark where the issue is one of Jewish priority and sequence, not exclusivity (see fn 162).

character response, the author brings to light heretofore, undisclosed views of his disciples, which offer the reader additional information regarding the nature of the disciples' resistance to Gentile mission.

What, then, does Jesus' ironic response reveal about his disciples' views? In connection with the Sea Crossing motif, I suggested that the disciples objected to the *manner* in which the Gentile mission was to be carried out, specifically, their required dependence upon Gentile hospitality. Now, it seems, that the second obstacle concerns the *timing* of the Gentile mission, relative to the Jewish mission, for Jesus says, "Let the children be satisfied *first*" (7:27a).<sup>162</sup> Why exactly the disciples take issue with the timing of the Gentile mission will be addressed when we come to ESC<sup>3</sup>, where the loaves discourse offers additional insight into the disciples objections.

### *The Identity of Jesus*

In each of The Loaves episodes encountered thus far, Jesus' identity and authority has been an important element, and this episode is no exception. Here, Jesus' authority is manifest in his ability to effect an exorcism at a distance and without any words, this latter aspect perhaps recalling his exorcism of the wind in ESC<sup>2</sup>, which he accomplished merely by getting into the boat (6:51).

Jesus' divine identity is also manifest in the Syrophoenician woman's address, Κύριε, (7:28), a significant, even if ambiguous, affirmation. The ambiguity lies in the fact that κύριος can be used as a polite form of address, *Sir*, or as a christological title, *Lord*, which early Christians used to link Jesus uniquely with YHWH, whose Hebrew name is translated as κύριος in the LXX. On the whole, Markan commentators interpret the Syrophoenician woman's address as merely a sign of respect, which would be the only time κύριος functions this way in Mark. Of its fifteen other occurrences, ten serve as designations for YHWH (1:3; 5:19; 11:9; 12:9, 11, 29ab, 30, 36a; 13:20), two as designations for the messiah (12:36b, 37), and three as self-designations by Jesus (2:28; 11:3; 13:35. Moreover, on at least two occasions, κύριος associates Jesus with YHWH (1:3; 5:19–20). In Mark, then, κύριος normally connotes divine authority and identity, making it more likely that the reader is expected to see in the Syrophoeni-

---

<sup>162</sup> Moreover, Jesus' response in Mark stands in marked contrast to its Matthean counterpart, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (15:24), where the *fact* of the Gentile mission, not its *sequence*, is seemingly problematic.

cian woman's address of Κύριε a recognition of Jesus' divine identity,<sup>163</sup> (if not on the story plane, at least on the discourse plane).

If this reading is correct, then we have another negative point of contact between the Syrophoenician woman and the disciples in ESC<sup>2</sup>, for her recognition of Jesus as Lord contrasts with the disciples' non-recognition of Jesus as Lord in his epiphanic sea walk. In turn, the same narrative logic appears to be operative in both episodes. In ESC<sup>2</sup>, the narrator ascribes the disciples' failure to recognize Jesus to their not understanding about the loaves, to their not understanding that the leftover loaves are intended for the Gentiles, and all of this is due to their hardened hearts (6:52). Given the particular rhetorical relationship between these two episodes, it stands to reason that the Syrophoenician woman is able to recognize Jesus' divine identity and authority because she understands the meaning and significance of the leftover loaves, presumably because her heart is not hardened. The disciples' hardness of heart stems from their unwillingness to accept Gentile hospitality, yet the Syrophoenician woman displays a softness of heart, manifest in her willing acceptance of Jewish hospitality, that is, her being satisfied to partake of their leftovers.

#### MARK 8:4, FEEDING *THESE* PEOPLE WITH LOAVES

Following this encounter, Jesus and his disciples remain in Gentile space in the next two episodes (7:31), which conclude with the Gentile meal (8:1–9). We are now in a position to revisit the disciples' puzzling question in Mark 8:4. As Hooker notes, their question, πόθεν τούτους δυνήσεται τις ὧδε χορτάσαι ἄρτων ἐπ' ἐρημίας; "is entirely sensible if the story is taken on its own, [but] seems incredibly stupid within the Markan framework."<sup>164</sup> That is, how can the disciples have forgotten the first mass feeding? After all, the Jewish meal was, by no means, an unremarkable event easily forgotten, nor were the disciples merely passive observers unaware of what had transpired.<sup>165</sup> No wonder Markan readers express incredulity over the disciples' incredulity. Ezra P. Gould remarks that their question is "psychologically impossible,"<sup>166</sup> and

---

<sup>163</sup> Guelich, *Mark*, 388; Miller, *Women*, 106; According to Miller, Monika Fander argues that the Syrophoenician woman's addressing Jesus as κύριε foreshadows the Roman centurion's recognition of Jesus as the Son of God (*Die Stellung der Frau im Markusevangelium. Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung kultur- und religionsgeschichtlicher Hintergründe* (MTA 8; Altenberge: Telos-Verlag, 1989), 80).

<sup>164</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, 189.

<sup>165</sup> As their correct response in 8:19 suggests.

<sup>166</sup> Ezra P. Gould, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1896), 142.



Tannehill that it “suggests a perverse blindness that must disturb the reader.”<sup>167</sup> As might be expected, there has been much speculation over how to explain and understand the disciples’ question. In the past, commentators tended to regard such incredible obtuseness as an inadvertent consequence, “an illusion accidentally created by the repetition of two versions [i.e., doublets] of the same traditional story.”<sup>168</sup> More recently, however, commentators tend to regard the disciples’ seemingly perverse blindness as deliberate, belonging to the messianic secret and/or incomprehension motifs.<sup>169</sup> Thus, whether the negative characterization of the disciples is deemed intentional or unintentional, scholars are almost universally agreed that the disciples’ question in 8:4 portrays them as exceedingly obtuse.<sup>170</sup>

This consensus is based upon the prevailing assumption that the disciples’ question concerns the impossibility of feeding so many people given their lack of resources and the remoteness of their wilderness location and so articulates essentially the same objections the disciples put forward in the first feeding. Yet, as I argued above, 8:4 has a different focus and thus a different function than the question in 6:37. Absent from 8:4 are the expected motifs of crowd size, resources needed, and resources on hand, and the emphasis interpreters put upon the wilderness setting is misplaced. Instead, the disciples’ question and the source of their incredulity centers upon the crowd as referred to with the focalized demonstrative pronoun, *τούτους*, though again it is not the *size* of the crowd that appears as problematic. What is it, then, about *these people* that so troubles the disciples and prompts them to question the viability of satisfying them with bread in the wilderness despite the fact that they not only witnessed but participated in the wilderness feeding of a large crowd?

Having followed the breadcrumb trail from the Jewish feeding to this point, we have sketched out a narrative context with potential for answering this question. Ever since Jesus forced his disciples to embark on what would ultimately be an

---

<sup>167</sup> Tannehill, *Disciples*, 399.

<sup>168</sup> Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes*, 93.

<sup>169</sup> Fowler’s own view is that the author of Mark constructed the F5000 from the traditional F4000 and then placed it first in the narrative for the express purpose of portraying the disciples as incredibly blind and stupid. “Interestingly, the author has chosen to control how the reader understands 8:1–10 not by significant internal changes in the traditional story but by manipulating the context within which it is read” (Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes*, 92–93).

<sup>170</sup> Gundry and Shiner are notable exceptions, both arguing, though on different grounds, that the disciples’ question is not intended to cast the disciples in a negative light but serves merely to underscore the magnitude of the anticipated miracle. Gundry, *Mark*, 393–94; Shiner, *Follow Me!*, 222–26.

aborted Gentile mission, Gentile-related issues have dotted the narrative landscape. In particular, we have uncovered evidence of the disciples' resistance to Gentile mission. Consequently, when the narrative arrives at a second feeding episode, one that features a Gentile crowd and disciples who, despite their earlier involvement in just such a feeding, exclaim, "How can anyone satisfy *these people* with bread in the wilderness?," it would appear that *τούτους* is being employed pejoratively to refer to the crowd's non-Jewish ethnic identity.<sup>171</sup> This reading not only fits within the larger narrative context, but it also accounts for the marked focus of *τούτους* and the absence of other expected elements. The disciples' incredulity is not occasioned by the crowd's size or any resources lacking or needed but by the crowd's Gentile ethnicity. Thus, their question reveals not an incredible *incomprehension* regarding Jesus' abilities but an enduring *resistance* to Gentile mission. The disciples are not questioning Jesus' ability but *anyone's* (τις) ability to satisfy Gentiles with loaves. How can Jesus suggest that they offer Gentiles the salvation that rightfully belongs to Israel? In short, the disciples are questioning any possibility of satisfying these dogs with the children's loaves,<sup>172</sup> which is how they interpret Jesus' implied request to feed the hungry crowd.<sup>173</sup> The disciples' question is, thus, another example of a failure to understand about the loaves due to their hardness of heart.

In the end, while I agree with those who see the disciples' question in 8:4 as contributing to the disciples' negative characterization, I differ over how to understand the exact nature of that negative characterization, seeing it as *resistance* instead

---

<sup>171</sup> Friedrich Blass, Albert Debrunner, and Robert Walter Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), BDF §290; A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934), 697. Other examples of what Robertson calls "the contemptuous use of οὗτος" can be found in Mark 2:7; 6:2a; 6:2b; 7:6; and possibly 12:40; see also ἡ γενεὰ αὕτη in 8:12ab, 38; 13:30.

<sup>172</sup> Once the pejorative, anti-Gentile sentiment of the disciples' question has been established, a new possibility arises regarding the significance of the wilderness setting. If the conjunction of ἄρτων and ἐπ' ἐρημίας is intended to evoke the Israel's Exodic wilderness sojourn, then perhaps ἐπ' ἐρημίας, which immediately follows ἄρτων, serves to qualify ἄρτων, the suggesting being that bread in the wilderness (i.e., manna) is food that belongs properly to the children of Israel, not to Gentiles. If so, then ἐπ' ἐρημίας plays a more prominent role than I initially granted, though a role still different from that generally thought.

<sup>173</sup> Χοιράζω, which occurs only four times and in three episodes (6:42; 7:27; 8:4, 8), provides a verbal link between Jesus' interactions with the Syrophoenician woman in 7:27–28 and with his disciples in 8:2–4. Although Smith does not follow my reading, he, nevertheless, sees a connection between the disciples' question and the earlier response of the Syrophoenician woman. "We notice that on this occasion, Jesus does not wait for the disciples to broach the question about how to feed so many people. He has just tested a Gentile woman, and she passed the test with flying colours." But here "the disciples manifestly failed the test" (Smith, *Lion*, 222–23).

of incomprehension, at least as generally understood. One potential problem with this reading of 8:4 is that I know of no other commentator who has entertained, let alone advocated it. In itself, this does not invalidate this reading, but it certainly gives one pause as to its viability. Yet, if my reading is to be preferred, why has it been completely missed by so many excellent scholars? In short, I would suggest that this situation owes much to the last two centuries of Markan scholarship, which has been so dominated by the related issues of the messianic secret and the negative characterization of the disciples that it has become axiomatic that the Markan disciples are portrayed as exceedingly uncomprehending. By contrast, few scholars have put forward arguments demonstrating that at least some of what has been identified as incomprehension is in fact more akin to intentional resistance. Thus, when readers come to the Gentile feeding having understood the failures of the disciples primarily or solely in terms of incomprehension, it makes complete sense that the disciples' question in 8:4 would be automatically regarded as just one more example of the disciples' increasing incomprehension. In fact, so strong is this notion of the disciples' incomprehension that scholars have consistently disregarded *τούτους* despite its marked focus,<sup>174</sup> and instead they read elements into the question that are neither present nor implied. In fact, *τούτους* and *ἄρτων* are often qualified in English translations in order to highlight the size of the crowd (e.g., *all* these people) and/or the amount of resources needed (e.g., *enough* bread) (Figure 6–20), not because the grammar requires these qualifications but because the larger narrative context, which purportedly concerns the disciples' incredible incomprehension, seems to require them.

<b>Mann</b>	How can anyone provide food for <b>all</b> these people in this lonely place? <sup>175</sup>
<b>Schweizer</b>	Where in this desert can anyone find <b>enough</b> food to feed <b>all</b> these people? <sup>176</sup>
<b>NIV</b>	Where can in this remote place anyone get <b>enough</b> bread to feed them?
<b>NJB</b>	Where could anyone get these people <b>enough</b> bread to eat in a deserted place?
<b>NLT</b>	How are we supposed to find <b>enough</b> food to feed them out here in the wilderness?
<b>NET</b>	Where can someone get <b>enough</b> bread in this desolate place to satisfy these people?
<b>CSB</b>	Where can anyone get <b>enough</b> bread here in this desolate place to fill these people?
<b>NAB</b>	Where can anyone get <b>enough</b> bread to satisfy them here in this deserted place?

<sup>174</sup> Gundry is the only commentator I have found who notes the emphatic position of *τούτους*. His only comment is that it calls “special attention to the difficulty [Jesus] faces in meeting [the crowd’s] need” (*Mark*, 394). Unfortunately, Gundry never clarifies how it does this.

<sup>175</sup> Mann, *Mark*, 324.

<sup>176</sup> Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News according to Mark* (trans. Donald H. Madvig; Richmond, Va.: John Knox, 1970), 155.

<b>CJB</b>	How can anyone find <b>enough</b> bread to satisfy these people in a remote place like this?
<b>NASB</b>	Where will anyone be able to find <b>enough</b> bread here in this desolate place to satisfy these people?

**Figure 6–20: Additions to English Translations of Mark 8:4**

In contrast, once the preceding narrative context is recognized as portraying the disciples’ as hard-hearted and resistant (and uncomprehending) and that their negative characterization is related specifically to Gentile issues, an additional narrative frame is available with which to interpret the actions and responses of the disciples. In this case, reading 8:4 in terms of resistance is not only consistent with the narrative developments we have witnessed leading up to this episode, it makes better sense of the actual grammar of the disciples’ question as we have it.

#### MARK 8:13–21, THE DISCUSSION ABOUT THE LOAVES

	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
ἄρτος		xx		x	x		x		
εἷς		x							
ζύμη			xx						
συνίημι					x				x
πέντε							x		
κλάω							x		
πόσος							x	x	
κόφινος							x		
κλάσμα							x	x	
πλήρης							x		
δώδεκα							x		
ἑπτὰ								xx	
σπυρίς								x	
πλήρωμα								x	

**Figure 6–21: Members of The Loaves Motif in Mark 8:13–21**

Following the Gentile meal, Jesus and his disciples immediately cross over to the Jewish side of the sea (8:10) where Pharisees confront Jesus, seeking from him a sign from heaven in order to test Jesus.<sup>177</sup> Jesus refuses to participate in their machinations and so re-embarks on a return journey to the Gentile side of the sea (8:13; cf. 8:22). During this crossing, for reasons that will become clear, the disciples are the unfortu-

<sup>177</sup> On the nature of this test, see Jeffrey B. Gibson, “Jesus’ Refusal to Produce a ‘Sign’ (Mk 8.11–13),” *JSNT* 38 (1990): 37–66.

nate beneficiaries of a stern warning followed by an exceedingly stern reprimand by Jesus.

As the sixth and final sea crossing and the third and final episodic sea crossing, Mark 8:13–21 serves to draw together the major narrative threads of the Sea Crossing movement, and of the breadcrumb trail in particular, in anticipation of and preparation for Peter’s climactic recognition scene (8:27–30), which brings both the movement and Part I to a close. ἄρτος occurs throughout the episode, from start to finish (14ab, 16, 17a, 19; implicitly in 17b, 20, 21),<sup>178</sup> such that *the loaves*, along with the Gentile trajectory of the crossing, play a critical role in unraveling the meaning and significance of this notoriously difficult passage,<sup>179</sup> as especially regards Jesus’ unusually harsh rebuke of his disciples.

### *The Harshness of Jesus’ Rebuke*

According to Gibson,

It is usually maintained that the reason Jesus rebukes his disciples in the Markan story of the Discussion about Bread is that when worrying about a lack of provisions, the disciples do not recall the fact that Jesus had miraculously fed multitudes, and fail, therefore, to have faith in his ability to meet their needs.<sup>180</sup>

Gibson, however, offers several reasons why this reading is unsatisfactory, the most significant being the observation that Jesus rebukes his disciples for hardness of heart, not lack of faith.<sup>181</sup> Here Gibson follows T. W. Manson who argues that Jesus “does not complain of lack of faith,” noting that “a rebuke for lack of faith would naturally be expressed in different terms as for example in Mk iv 40.”<sup>182</sup> This is an important distinction. Jesus’ rebuke is lengthy, especially by Markan standards,<sup>183</sup> and includes multiple accusations: lack of perception (17), understanding (17, 21), and memory (18); hardness of heart (17); and blindness (18a) and deafness (18b). Absent, however, are any references to cowardice, fear, or lack of faith, the charges Jesus levels

---

<sup>178</sup> ἄρτος is implied three times; twice as the DNC of συνίημι (8:17b, 21) and once of ἐπτά (8:20).

<sup>179</sup> “It is a bold exegete who will claim to understand this passage” (Quesnell, *Mind*, 103; Quesnell states that this quote comes from Vincent Taylor (*The Gospel according to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1952, 1963.)), but he does not include the page number, and I have been unable to locate it in Taylor.

<sup>180</sup> Gibson, “Rebuke,” 31.

<sup>181</sup> Gibson, “Rebuke,” 31.

<sup>182</sup> T. W. Manson, “Mark viii.14–21,” *JTS* 30 (1928): 45–46. Cf. also Jesus’ response in 6:6 where he marvels at the peoples’ unbelief.

<sup>183</sup> Quesnell, *Mind*, 108–10.

against the disciples in ESC<sup>1</sup> (4:40). Given the numerous narrative connections between ESC<sup>1</sup> and ESC<sup>3</sup>, the fact that none of the charges leveled against the disciples in the one also occurs in the other strongly suggests that the disciples' failures differ categorically between these two episodes. In ESC<sup>1</sup>, the disciples unambiguously manifest a lack of faith in Jesus' abilities due to "anxious self-concern"<sup>184</sup> (4:38); it follows then that, in ESC<sup>3</sup>, the disciples manifest some other flaw. Not only is there a complete absence of faith language in ESC<sup>3</sup>, as found elsewhere in Mark,<sup>185</sup> but the severity of Jesus' rebuke along with the language it employs suggests a much more egregious offense than simple incomprehension occasioned by a lack of faith.

First, on three previous occasions, Jesus has rebuked the disciples for lacking faith (4:40) or for not understanding (4:13; 7:18–19); yet none of these reprimands approaches the length or severity of tone as the rebuke Jesus issues in 8:17–21 (Figure 6–22).

<b>4:13</b>	Καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· οὐκ οἶδατε τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην, καὶ πῶς πάσας τὰς παραβολὰς γνῶσεσθε;
<b>4:40</b>	καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· τί δειλοὶ ἐστε; οὐπω ἔχετε πίστιν;
<b>7:18–19</b>	καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀσύνετοί ἐστε; οὐ νοεῖτε ὅτι . . .
<b>8:17–21</b>	καὶ γνοὺς λέγει αὐτοῖς· τί διαλογίζεσθε ὅτι ἄρτους οὐκ ἔχετε; οὐπω νοεῖτε οὐδὲ συνίετε; πεπωρωμένην ἔχετε τὴν καρδίαν ὑμῶν; ὀφθαλμοὺς ἔχοντες οὐ βλέπετε καὶ ὠτα ἔχοντες οὐκ ἀκούετε; καὶ οὐ μνημονεύετε, ὅτε . . . καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς· οὐπω συνίετε;

**Figure 6–22: Jesus' Rebukes of the Markan Disciples in Part I**

<sup>184</sup> Tannehill, "Disciples," 400.

<sup>185</sup> I agree with Marshall that the absence of the word *faith* (i.e., πίστις, πιστεύω) in a given episode "does not necessarily mean that the idea of faith is lacking, for it could be expressed by various other word combinations, or by synonyms, or be implicit in the way action is described." (*Faith*, 30). Clearly, within the Markan narrative, other words are brought within the "semantic orbit of faith" (31), and so possess the potential of evoking faith in contexts where πίστις and πιστεύω are absent. Nevertheless, as Marshall cautions, "Care must be taken not to collapse too much into the one concept by reading every case where faith-associated words recur as an implied commentary on faith; the same word might have quite different significance in different contexts" (31). Essentially, I would submit that such care has not been exercised by the majority of commentators who deal with Mark 8:13–21.

Instead, its severity is more in keeping with how Jesus has responded to opponents (2:8–11; 3:4–5; 3:23–30; 7:6–13; 8:12), who are charged with questioning in their hearts (2:8; cf. 8:17), blaspheming the Holy Spirit (3:29), abandoning the commandments of God (7:8, 13), and having hard hearts (3:5; cf. 8:17), none of which quite fit the categories of faithlessness or incomprehension but more the categories of resistance and opposition.

Second, Jesus' question regarding the disciples' *hardened hearts* (πεπωρωμένην ἔχετε τὴν καρδίαν ὑμῶν; 8:17) indicates that they are being accused of an action or attitude fitting the category of willful, stubborn opposition. "This is the harshest criticism of the disciples in the gospel."<sup>186</sup> Yet, many commentators either overlook its harshness or attempt to mitigate it, especially when it applies to Jesus' disciples (6:52; 8:17), which misses the implications such a charge has for how the reader is expected to evaluate the disciples. For example, in discussing 6:52, Gundry treats *hardness of heart* as though it were synonymous with *not understanding*, with which it is twice associated in the narrative (6:52; 8:17).<sup>187</sup> While I grant that, in Jewish thought, the heart is the seat of the intellect so that hardness of heart might imply incomprehension; the heart is also the seat of the will, giving hardness of heart an intentionality that mere incomprehension does not possess. Thus, in 3:5, when Jesus is angered and grieved over the Pharisees' *hardness of heart* (τῇ πωρώσει τῆς καρδίας αὐτῶν), it is not because they are unable to understand but because they refuse to do so. Certainly, in accordance with their hardened hearts, the Pharisees lack insight; for example, they fail to see that the authority animating Jesus' words and actions is of divine origin. Yet, from the evaluative viewpoint of the Markan narrator, their incomprehension is the product, not the cause, of their persistent, willful refusal to acknowledge that what is being manifest in their midst is of God.

If the καρδία, the seat of mental discernment and spiritual insight, is hardened it cannot function properly to accept new insight. Jesus' critics are 'set in their ways' and their insensitivity (or 'obdurate stupidity,' Mann) both hurts and angers him.<sup>188</sup>

---

<sup>186</sup> Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 252.

<sup>187</sup> Gundry, *Mark*, 337–38. Instead of synonymous, it is more likely that the two expressions are part of a Markan two-step progression where ἀλλ' ἦν αὐτῶν ἡ καρδία πεπωρωμένη serves to qualify the first expression, οὐ γὰρ συνήκαν ἐπὶ τοῖς ἄρτοις (6:52).

<sup>188</sup> France, *Mark*, 151.

Therefore, while hardness of heart might involve incomprehension, it cannot be reduced to incomprehension; these concepts are related but not synonymous. Hardness of heart has “a more ominous [tone].”<sup>189</sup>

Yet, even commentators who acknowledge the harshness of Jesus’ accusation of hardness of heart attempt to mitigate its severity when it characterizes the disciples. For example, when considering 6:52, Marcus wonders why Mark speaks of the disciples’ hardened heart rather than of their blinded eyes, the latter seemingly more appropriate “since they suffer more from an *inability* to perceive than an *unwillingness* to do so.”<sup>190</sup> Similarly, France asserts, “This is remarkably strong language to use for what appears to be the natural slowness of ordinary people to adjust to the presence of the extraordinary.”<sup>191</sup> Here, Marcus and France acknowledge the severity of the charge of hardness of heart, yet both consider its application to the disciples to be problematic, never entertaining the possibility that something other than basic incomprehension might account for and warrant its use.

These examples illustrate, once again, how the established notion of the Markan disciples as severely-uncomprehending influences interpretations of individual episodes. Yet, the charge of hardness of heart implies an intentionality and thus a culpability that few Markan commentators have attempted to account for. My earlier argument that the disciples in 6:52 are credited with hardened hearts because of their resistance to engaging in Gentile mission is one such attempt to account for this language. Moreover, this reading of 6:52 has a bearing on how the reference to the disciples’ hardened hearts in 8:17, which clearly alludes to 6:52, is to be read.

Space does not permit a detailed treatment of all the other negative descriptors in Jesus’ rebuke, but such an investigation would arrive at the same basic conclusion, namely, that what Jesus accuses the disciples of goes well beyond incomprehension or lack of faith. For example, Gibson notes that the language of *not remembering* (οὐ μνημονεύετε, 8:18) “is drawn from the technical vocabulary employed in the Old Testament in exhortations against unfaithfulness,” meaning that the disciples are being accused “not of a lapse of memory but of *disobedience*.”<sup>192</sup> Likewise, the questions regarding their blindness and deafness (ὀφθαλμοὺς ἔχοντες οὐ βλέπετε καὶ ὠτα ἔχον-

---

<sup>189</sup> France, *Mark*, 273.

<sup>190</sup> Marcus, *Mark* 1–8, 427–28 (emphasis added).

<sup>191</sup> France, *Mark*, 275.

<sup>192</sup> Gibson, “Rebuke,” 33–34.



τες οὐκ ἀκούετε, 8:18) amount to accusations of disobedience and unfaithfulness.<sup>193</sup> Whether these two lines are drawing upon Jeremiah 5:21 and/or Ezekiel 12:2, as the majority of commentators argue, or are a paraphrase of Isaiah 6:10a, the portion of Isaiah 6:9–10 left out of Mark 4:12, as Beavis maintains,<sup>194</sup> the result is the same. In each of these OT contexts where the “the almost formulaic diatribes of Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel are uttered[,] Israel’s imperviousness and outright rebellion against God are described as moral blindness and deafness.”<sup>195</sup> The same can be said for accusations of cognitive imperception (οὐπω νοεῖτε οὐδὲ συνίετε; 8:17; οὐπω συνίετε; 8:21), given that this or similar language also appears in these prophetic rebukes. As Gibson notes:

οὐ(πω) συνίετε is a phrase drawn from the vocabulary of prophetic polemic against *apostasy*, and has to do less, therefore, with condemnation for failure to grasp something intellectually than castigation for a refusal to accept and follow the implications of something that is understood.<sup>196</sup>

(What it is that the disciples *do* understand but refuse to accept will be considered below.) In short,

the whole catalogue of vices associated with outsiders and opponents (2:7; 3:6; 4:11f) are attributed to the disciples: incomprehension, blindness, deafness, ‘reasoning’, forgetfulness and hardness of heart. The use of this terminology is not meant to imply that the disciples are now the enemies of Jesus. Rather, it is indicative of an attempt by Jesus, by bombarding them with a series of rhetorical questions, to shock his disciples (and Mark’s audience) into appreciating the existential seriousness of their condition. They are in mortal danger of succumbing to the same resistance to the truth that afflicts the religious leaders and against which he has just warned them (v 15).<sup>197</sup>

In the end, the harshness of Jesus’ rebuke renders the consensus reading of this climactic sea crossing untenable. Jesus’ recourse to the language of hardness of heart and the other descriptors with their connotations of apostasy, disobedience, and rebellion seem disproportionately severe, that is, if the disciples are being rebuked for lacking faith in Jesus’ ability to provide for their needs. Instead, the nature and sever-

---

<sup>193</sup> Gibson, “Rebuke,” 34.

<sup>194</sup> Beavis, *Mark’s Audience*, 90–91.

<sup>195</sup> Eugene E. Lemcio, “External Evidence for the Structure and Function of Mark 4:1–20, 7:14–23 and 8:14–21,” *JTS* 29 (1978): 332.

<sup>196</sup> Gibson, “Rebuke,” 34.

<sup>197</sup> Marshall, *Faith*, 211–12.

ity of Jesus' diatribe implies willful opposition on the part of the disciples and thus a culpable incomprehension.

#### *Excursus — Matthew 16:5–12*

Before moving on, it is worth taking a moment to consider Matthew's treatment of this same episode (16:5–12) because it corroborates our reading of the nature of Jesus' rebuke in Mark. Unlike in Mark, the Matthean disciples are admonished by Jesus for lacking faith (ὀλιγόπιστοι, 16:8). Moreover, the number of indictments has been significantly reduced in Matthew, with the harshest having been eliminated (Figure 6–23). Gone are any references to hardness of heart, blindness, and deafness and with them their connotations of disobedience and purposeful resistance. Absent as well is the twice-repeated, οὐπω συνίετε. Furthermore, Matthew's account ends, not with a question regarding the disciples' incomprehension but, with a statement that the disciples finally did comprehend the meaning of Jesus' initial warning (16:12).

Mark 8:17–21	Matthew 16:8–12
καὶ γνοὺς λέγει αὐτοῖς· τί διαλογίζεσθε	γνοὺς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν· τί διαλογίζεσθε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς,
ὅτι ἄρτους οὐκ ἔχετε;	ὀλιγόπιστοι, ὅτι ἄρτους οὐκ ἔχετε;
οὐπω νοεῖτε οὐδὲ συνίετε; πεπωρωμένην ἔχετε τὴν καρδίαν ὑμῶν; ὀφθαλμοὺς ἔχοντες οὐ βλέπετε καὶ ᾠτα ἔχοντες οὐκ ἀκούετε; καὶ οὐ μνημονεύετε . . .	οὐπω νοεῖτε,     οὐδὲ μνημονεύετε . . .
οὐπω συνίετε;	τότε συνήκαν . . .

**Figure 6–23: Synopsis of Mark 8:17–21 and Matthew 16:8–12**

In Matthew, the severity (or lack thereof) of Jesus' rebuke matches the severity of the disciples' offense; the disciples exhibit anxious self-concern and, accordingly, are rebuked for having little faith. Matthew's characterization of the disciples in ESC<sup>3</sup> is consistent with their characterization elsewhere and corresponds to distinctive Matthean concerns. For example, in the first two ESCs, the disciples are also portrayed as lacking faith, ὀλιγόπιστος having been introduced into both accounts (8:26; 14:31). In 6:25–34, Jesus teaches on not being anxious about one's food or

clothing (6:25–34), the only other place ὀλιγόπιστος occurs (6:30).<sup>198</sup> Thus, we would expect the severity of the Markan Jesus’ rebuke to match the severity of the Markan disciples’ transgressions and to fit with the portrayal of the disciples elsewhere in the narrative. Positing purposeful resistance not only makes better sense of the Markan account than the typical appeal to their purported anxious self-concern and lack of faith, it also fits better with Mark’s overall characterization of the disciples, especially where the loaves are concerned.

“Forgetting” to Bring Loaves, Mark 8:14

If this reading is correct, then “it forces a question upon us,” namely, “what is it that the disciples do on the occasion of the discussion about bread that indicates to Jesus that their ‘hearts are hardened,’ that they are beset with the ‘blindness,’ ‘deafness,’ and ‘non-understanding’ which typifies ‘those outside?’”<sup>199</sup> That is, what do the disciples do that demonstrates their opposition to Jesus and/or some aspect of his mission? Gibson suggests that the answer lies in the disciples *forgetting* (ἐπελάθοντο, 8:14) to take extra loaves with them on the boat for their “‘forgetting’ is not inadvertence, not an unintentional lapse of memory or attention, but wilful neglect.”<sup>200</sup>

Here Gibson’s argument largely depends upon the use of ἐπιλανθάνομαι, which can mean *to forget, neglect, or overlook*.<sup>201</sup> According to Gibson, ἐπιλανθάνομαι is one of an alleged fifty words that occur only once in Mark but are also found in the LXX.<sup>202</sup> A supposedly distinctive feature of these purported Septuagintal *hapax legomena* is “when they are used by Mark, they are always employed with their most basic Septuagintal sense.”<sup>203</sup> Finally, in more than 100 of its 122 uses in the LXX, ἐπιλανθάνομαι means to *overlook consciously, or neglect willfully* and generally occurs

<sup>198</sup> The feminine noun, ὀλιγοπιστία, occurs once (17:20).

<sup>199</sup> Gibson, “Rebuke,” 35.

<sup>200</sup> Gibson, “Rebuke,” 35.

<sup>201</sup> BDAG, “ἐπιλανθάνομαι,” 374.

<sup>202</sup> Gibson, “Rebuke,” 35. Unfortunately, this statistic cannot be confirmed, and it actually appears to be completely mistaken. In support, Gibson points to Henry Barclay Swete, *The Gospel according to St Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1909), xlv; yet, on that page, Swete lists 79 words that occur in Mark (not including proper names) but nowhere else in the NT, 41 of which he identifies as occurring in the LXX. Thus, Swete does not identify words that occur only once in Mark. Moreover, ἐπιλανθάνομαι does not even appear in the list as it occurs elsewhere in the NT. My own investigation revealed approximately 500 words that occur in the LXX and just once in Mark.

<sup>203</sup> Gibson, “Rebuke,” 35, 45n48. This assertion is highly questionable from a linguistic standpoint, and even then Gibson provides only two examples to substantiate this sweeping claim, one of which does not fit his own qualifications since it occurs twice in Mark (συνθλίβω, 5:24, 31).

in contexts concerned with matters of covenant faithfulness and unfaithfulness,<sup>204</sup> which would situate it within the same semantic frame as many of the accusations Jesus levels against his disciples. In the end, while there are significant problems with Gibson's data,<sup>205</sup> it is sufficient for our purposes that ἐπιλανθάνομαι occurs in contexts outside Mark where the forgetting, overlooking, or neglecting is intentional.<sup>206</sup> After all, the Markan narrative context must ultimately determine whether καὶ ἐπελάθοντο λαβεῖν ἄρτους (8:14) connotes an accidental or intentional act. Gibson concludes the latter, claiming that, "the disciples take no more than one loaf with them on their journey because they *refuse* to do otherwise."<sup>207</sup> This act of willful *neglect* constitutes willful *opposition* because its objective is "to deny those not of Israel the 'bread' which Jesus had previously demonstrated is theirs."<sup>208</sup> That is, in refusing to take along extra loaves (and it must be remembered that the disciples are the ones who supplied the seed loaves for the first two feedings), the disciples are hoping to thwart another Gentile feeding, to prohibit a second offering of salvation and participation in God's kingdom to those beyond the borders of Israel's inheritance.

As I stated in my introductory chapter, Gibson's thesis has received very little attention and even less support in the scholarly literature, which Gibson himself anticipated.<sup>209</sup> Challenging a consensus is always difficult. The evidence and argument must not only be sufficient for establishing one's own position but also sufficiently compelling to compete with a position that has often achieved the status and feel of basic common sense, in which case a paradigm shift may need to occur for the new position to take hold, or even to gain a hearing. The traditional reading, whereby the disciples are rebuked for a lack of faith that results in a failure to comprehend Jesus' leaven parable, appears to have attained such common-sense status, in part because this is also the consensus reading of the Matthean parallel, in part because commentators interpret the failures of the Markan disciples up to this point in the narrative almost exclusively under the banner of incomprehension and faithlessness, and in part because the episode resembles a form of dialogue wherein the Markan disciples play the stereotypical role of uncomprehending foils.

---

<sup>204</sup> Gibson, "Rebuke," 35, 45n49. Cf. Deut 8:11, 26:13; Ps 78:7; Prov 3:1; Jer 18:15; Ezek 23:35.

<sup>205</sup> See footnotes 202 and 203.

<sup>206</sup> See also Phil 3:13 where Paul's *forgetting* what is behind is a conscious, ongoing decision.

<sup>207</sup> Gibson, "Rebuke," 35 (emphasis original).

<sup>208</sup> Gibson, "Rebuke," 36 (emphasis original).

<sup>209</sup> Gibson, "Rebuke," 37.

Half a century ago, C. H. Dodd identified a dialogue form in John's gospel, which exhibits the following pattern:

- [1] A dialogue commonly opens with an oracular utterance by Jesus.
- [2] The interlocutor makes a response which indicates either blank incomprehension or else a crude misunderstanding.
- [3] Jesus sometimes retorts with a reproach,
- [4] but always the failure to understand provides him with an occasion to explicate the enigmatic saying or carry the thought further.<sup>210</sup>

Others have argued that ESC<sup>3</sup> exhibits (essentially) this same formal pattern,<sup>211</sup> a view that has garnered general acceptance. Without debating the extent to which ESC<sup>3</sup> does or does not fit the pattern(s) identified by Dodd, Lemcio, and Sellw (there are important similarities *and* dissimilarities), an important question needs to be asked. The dialogue form Dodd identifies involves what he calls *blank incomprehension* or *crude misunderstanding*. Likewise, many who recognize this same pattern to be at work in ESC<sup>3</sup> unquestioningly assume that the disciples are rebuked for such blank, crude incomprehension. Yet, could it be that Dodd's *description* of this pattern, not his identification of it, has influenced and perpetuated the interpretation of the disciples in ESC<sup>3</sup> as uncomprehending foils? In this regard, Lemcio is unique for he rightly discerns a fundamental difference between the dialogue in ESC<sup>3</sup> and the Johannine dialogues Dodd discusses (or the didactic scenes Sellw discusses), notably, that in ESC<sup>3</sup>, "The disciples are guilty not of an empty head but of a hardened heart."<sup>212</sup> Unfortunately, this distinction has rarely been recognized, let alone appreciated. Once again, it is the severity of Jesus' rebuke that distinguishes ESC<sup>3</sup> from the didactic scenes it resembles.<sup>213</sup>

---

<sup>210</sup> C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965) 317–18 (numbers in brackets have been added).

<sup>211</sup> Most notably Lemcio, "External Evidence," 330; Sellw, "Didactic Scenes," 620. Mark 4:3–20 and 7:14–23 are also identified as exhibiting this pattern. Dodd identifies Mark 8:15ff. as the only Synoptic dialogue approaching the form of the Johannine type yet maintains that the similarities are limited (*Historical Tradition*, 317n2).

<sup>212</sup> Lemcio, "External Evidence," 335.

<sup>213</sup> Sellw is so intent on demonstrating that the evangelist composed 8:14–21 after the compositional model of the *didactic* scene that he found in his source material (i.e., 4:3–20; 7:14–23) (617), that he misses the parallels between ESC<sup>3</sup> and earlier *controversy* scenes (e.g., 2:1–12), which I shall return to below. This despite Sellw's recognition that his didactic scene "overlaps in some ways with Bultmann's form-critical classification of controversy or scholastic dialogues" (613). Not unrelated to this deficiency is the fact that, for Sellw, the disciples have "inadvertently forgotten" (617) to take food; Jesus' questions are designed to highlight the disciples' "shortcomings" (618); and the disciples exhibit a "slowness or inability to learn" (619). In short, Sellw characterizes the disciples' problems more benignly than the language Jesus uses of the disciples would suggest ("Didactic Scenes").

In short, a number of factors contribute to the lack of attention Gibson's thesis has received. For it to be given a more serious hearing, something of a paradigm shift is required, which will only happen if there is a perceived problem. Those who dismiss Gibson's reading never actually contend with his strongest argument,<sup>214</sup> which I have emphasized time and again, namely, the harshness of Jesus' rebuke and the language Jesus employs implies disobedience and willful opposition on the part of the disciples. The consensus reading does not adequately account for the nature and severity of Jesus' rebuke. Granted, Gibson's reading is not necessarily the only reading that might do justice to the nature of Jesus' rebuke, but so far no other viable alternatives have been put forward.

My contribution has been to establish the sort of broad, narrative context within which Gibson's reading fits. By following the breadcrumb trail, we have encountered, on more than one occasion, the disciples manifesting resistance and opposition, which, moreover, has been occasioned by the very issue Gibson has identified in his brief article: the participation of Gentiles in Israel's inheritance. Gibson's suggestion that the disciples are rebuked for attempting to thwart another Gentile feeding may seem, in the words of France, improbable.<sup>215</sup> I would submit, however, that this sort of response has much to do with the fact that Gibson's proposal is being read and evaluated, not on its own terms and merits but merely in accordance with the terms and merits of the traditional reading, which suggests that some begging of the question might be occurring. That is, under the prevailing paradigm, ESC<sup>3</sup> is read as belonging to a narrative cycle thought to emphasize the *persistent incomprehension* of the disciples, even regarded by some as inculpable.<sup>216</sup> Seen from this perspective, claims of willful opposition appear dubious. Yet, how would Gibson's reading fare if ESC<sup>3</sup> were read as participating in a narrative cycle that is punctuated by the disciples' *persistent opposition* to Gentile mission? This is the paradigm shift the evidence demands. What follows, then, is a reading of ESC<sup>3</sup> that corresponds to the narrative developments, we have witnessed thus far.

---

<sup>214</sup> France, *Mark*, 315n18. Gundry, *Mark*, 415. Marshall, *Faith*, 217–218n2.

<sup>215</sup> France, *Mark*, 315n18.

<sup>216</sup> E.g., Matera, "Incomprehension," 154–62.

“Several Loaves,” Mark 8:14, 16

In the Sea Crossing movement, prior to the aborted ESC<sup>2</sup>, the portrait of the disciples consists of both positive and negative vignettes. In one scene, Jesus chides<sup>217</sup> the disciples for not knowing the parable of the sower (4:13), and in another, he calls them cowards and questions their faith (4:40). Yet, nothing in the characterization of the disciples in these early scenes is as radically and persistently negative as that which commences with ESC<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, the positive vignettes outnumber and outweigh the negative ones. The disciples are presented as insiders, being granted the mystery of the kingdom of God (4:11) and receiving private explanations of Jesus’ parables (4:34), and they carry out a highly successful mission in Galilee (6:7–13, 30). In fact, as the movement develops, the portrait of the disciples becomes increasingly positive, ending on a high note with their active participation in the Jewish meal. However, from the moment Jesus forces his disciples to embark for Gentile Bethsaida (6:45), the portrayal of the disciples takes a dramatic downward turn, becoming decidedly and increasingly negative through to Peter’s unexpected recognition of Jesus’ messianic identity in 8:29.

The portrait that emerges is one of resistance and opposition to Jesus’ Gentile mission and their participation in it. To review, in 6:45, Jesus must *force* the disciples to embark for Bethsaida on account of their unwillingness to submit to Gentile hospitality as their missionary directives dictate. Symbolic of their resistance is their all-night struggle against an adverse wind. They are then unable to recognize Jesus during his epiphanic passing by and are subsequently frightened by his calming of the wind. All of these failures stem from the disciples not understanding, on the basis of the leftover loaves, God’s intention that the Gentiles also be fed. That is, their hardness of heart has blinded them to God’s purposes (6:52). This hardness of heart regarding Gentiles also prevents them from perceiving and understanding the meaning and implications of Jesus’ purity parable (7:15, 17–18), namely, that in rendering all foods clean Jesus has removed any legal obstacles that might prohibit his Jewish disciples from engaging in Gentile mission. In 8:4, the disciples’ hardness of heart manifests itself a third time when they question the possibility of *these people* being fed with loaves (8:4), that is, any possibility of Gentiles participating in Israel’s blessings.

---

<sup>217</sup> At this point, *rebuke* would be too strong of a description, given that οἶδα and γνωρίζω are used here, which never acquire the degree of harshness that νοέω and συνίημι acquire (4:12; 7:18; 8:17).

This brings us to the final sea crossing, which is destined for Gentile shores. Here, the disciples, true to form—at least when *loaves* are concerned—demonstrate opposition to Gentile mission, this time by intentionally neglecting to take along several loaves in a concerted effort to prevent Jesus from hosting another Gentile meal (8:14).

Here, we must be clear on what is being conveyed in 8:14, the interpretation of which significantly affects one's reading of the remainder of the episode. The Greek text reads: καὶ ἐπελάθοντο λαβεῖν ἄρτους καὶ εἰ μὴ ἓνα ἄρτον οὐκ εἶχον μεθ' ἑαυτῶν ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ, which is normally translated into English with something like, "They forgot to bring (any) bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat." The first problem with such a translation (and interpretations based upon it) is that two different words, *bread* and *loaf*, are used to translate ἄρτος, completely obscuring the contrast between *loaves* (plural) and *loaf* (singular). In addition, using *bread* instead of *loaves* obscures any possible rhetorical links between 8:14 and other places in Mark where *loaves* occurs. The second problem with most English translations is that their grammar highlights the one loaf the disciples have instead of the several loaves they do not have, which is where the emphasis lies. Note, the reference to the one loaf occurs in a dependent clause, εἰ μὴ ἓνα ἄρτον, which is subordinate to the main clause, οὐκ εἶχον μεθ' ἑαυτῶν ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ, where *loaves* (ἄρτους) is the implied object complement of εἶχον, which is supplied from 8:14a and is confirmed by 8:16 (ἄρτους οὐκ ἔχουσιν) and 8:17 (ἄρτους οὐκ ἔχετε). Thus, the translation, "they had only one loaf with them in the boat," loses both the subordination of ἓνα ἄρτον and the implicit reference to *loaves*, shifting the emphasis away from *loaves* to *loaf*.

A translation that better captures the syntax, emphasis, and meaning of the original would be: "They forgot to bring *several* loaves, and except for one loaf, they did not have *several* (or *any*) loaves with them in the boat."<sup>218</sup> Here, the modifier, *several*, helps the English reflect the contrast being made between ἄρτους and ἄρτον in the Greek.<sup>219</sup> What we have here in 8:14, then, is another Markan two-step progression, designed to underscore the fact that the disciples did not take, and so do not have (cf. 8:16, 17), several loaves with them in the boat. In other words, the narrator's point is *not* that the disciples did not have any bread *nor* that they had just one

<sup>218</sup> This translation has been adapted from Norman A. Beck, "Reclaiming a Biblical Text: The Mark 8:14–21 Discussion about Bread in the Boat," *CBQ* 43 (1981): 49.

<sup>219</sup> "Multiple loaves" is another viable translation as is "extra loaves," which is used by Gibson ("Rebuke," 32, 41n11) and Iverson after him (*Gentiles*, 96).



loaf of bread but that *they did not take along several loaves of bread*, a subtle yet critical distinction for a proper understanding of the narrative development and flow of this concluding sea crossing. That the one loaf is not itself the focal point of the progression but only serves to highlight the disciples neglecting to take along several loaves finds further support in the fact that it plays no further role in the episode. If the focal point were ἓνα ἄρτον, one would expect the disciples in 8:16, and Jesus in 8:17, to speak in terms of having only one loaf instead of not having several loaves.<sup>220</sup> As it is, the accent falls upon the several loaves the disciples intentionally neglect to bring, thereby focusing the reader's attention on their overt act of opposition.

#### *The Leaven Warning, Mark 8:15*

Jesus responds to such willful opposition by issuing a stern warning, "Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod" (8:15). He warns the disciples because they are exhibiting signs of "succumb[ing] to an attitude in line with Jesus' opponents."<sup>221</sup> In Mark, the Pharisees (and Herodians) are characterized as having hardened hearts (3:5) because they refuse to acknowledge the obvious implications of Jesus' actions, be it his healing on the sabbath (3:1–6) or his table-fellowship with toll-collectors and sinners (2:15–17), which point not only to Jesus' divine authority and identity but also to a view of God's kingdom as being open to those whom the Pharisees "do not officially recogniz[e] as belonging to Israel."<sup>222</sup> Moreover, just prior to this scene, the Pharisees request Jesus to produce a sign from heaven (8:11), perhaps seeking his justification for his stance on Jewish purity regulations and/or for his healing and feeding of Gentiles. Jesus dismisses their request. The fact is, they have already been granted numerous signs authenticating Jesus' identity and

---

<sup>220</sup> This understanding about the function of the one loaf does not necessarily preclude its performing a symbolic function as so many have argued. Nevertheless, it should be recognized that if it does functions symbolically, it does so on the level of the narrative's discourse. That is, to interpret Jesus' rebuke of the disciples as being occasioned by their failure to recognize him as the one loaf is to confuse discourse and story dimensions of the text. Whether *the reader* is expected to see in the one loaf an allusion to Jesus and/or the eucharist is a different matter altogether.

<sup>221</sup> Iverson, *Gentiles*, 97.

<sup>222</sup> Gibson, "Rebuke," 32.

justifying his mission but to no avail; one more sign would be of no benefit to those who have hardened their hearts and so blinded themselves to the truth.<sup>223</sup>

Like the Herodians and Pharisees, the disciples have been acting in ways that demonstrate their unwillingness to acknowledge the implications of Jesus' teachings and actions as they relate to the matter of Gentile mission, the most recent being their refusal to take along loaves as they head back into Gentile territory. "Despite the persistent teaching of an open table, they have succumbed to an attitude in line with Jesus' opponents. They are resistant to . . . the inclusion of those not typically considered within the boundaries of Israel."<sup>224</sup> Comparing the disciples' attitudes to those conspiring to bring about Jesus' death and those responsible for John's death, makes this a very serious charge.<sup>225</sup> Thus, according to the reading advocated here, Jesus' parabolic warning is occasioned by the disciples neglecting to take along loaves, and not, as some would argue, a carryover from Jesus' most recent exchange with the Pharisees.<sup>226</sup>

#### *Not Understanding about the Loaves, Mark 8:16–21*

Having established a causal relationship between the disciples' actions in 8:14 and Jesus' warning in 8:15, we are now in a position to consider the relationships between 8:16 and 8:15 and between 8:17–21 and 8:16.

In response to Jesus' leaven warning, the disciples discuss with one another that they do not have several loaves (8:16), to which Jesus responds, "Why are you discussing that you do not have several loaves? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Do you have hardened hearts?" etc. (8:17). To review, according to the majority reading, the narrative logic of this exchange is as follows. In 8:16, the disciples discuss not having *any bread* because they have misunderstood Jesus' leaven warning due to their anxious self-concern stemming from a lack of faith in Jesus' ability to provide for their physical needs. Consequently, in 8:17–21, Jesus rebukes his disciples for their incomprehension and/or lack of faith. Yet, this reading has already been

---

<sup>223</sup> Given the ominous tone of the request, if the Pharisees have concluded that Jesus is a false prophet leading Israel astray (Deut 13:1–5), then getting Jesus to produce a sign from heaven (i.e., a portent; Deut 13:1) would provide them with a basis for executing him, which has been the plan of the Pharisees and Herodians since 3:6.

<sup>224</sup> Iverson, *Gentiles*, 97.

<sup>225</sup> Moloney, *Mark*, 160.

<sup>226</sup> So France, *Mark*, 315; Lane, *Mark*, 280. Surprisingly, most commentators consulted do not discuss what prompts Jesus to issue the warning in the first place.

ruled out for the nature and harshness of Jesus' rebuke is consonant neither with a basic incomprehension nor with an incomprehension born of lack of faith. We must, therefore, search for alternative ways of construing the relationship between 8:16 and 8:15, which are consistent with the causal relationship established between 8:15 and 8:14 and which are informed by and make sense of the rebuke that follows in 8:17–21.

Two alternatives present themselves: (1) The disciples' discussion in 8:16 could reflect their misunderstanding of Jesus' parabolic leaven warning, though a misunderstanding born of something other than a lack of faith. (2) The disciples' discussion in 8:16 could also represent their recognition that Jesus' leaven warning was occasioned by their refusal to bring loaves. As we shall see, whichever option is chosen, the same conclusion results: Jesus' scathing rebuke of the disciples in 8:17–21 goes beyond their discussion in 8:16, ultimately pointing to their active opposition to Gentile mission.

(1) Even after ruling out the view that the disciples have misunderstood Jesus' leaven warning due to a lack of faith, their discussion in 8:16 could still be construed as conveying their incomprehension. This is based upon the similarities that exist between ESC<sup>3</sup>, on the one hand, and 4:1–20 and 7:14–23, on the other, both of which exhibit the didactic pattern of parable–incomprehension–rebuke–explanation. This option assumes that Jesus' leaven warning fits the category of a Markan parable (which is possible) and that Jesus' questions concerning the two feedings in 8:19–20 is equivalent to an explanation of the original parable (which is possible but less likely). In support of the similarities, Lemcio notes that in Jesus' rebuke in 8:17–18, the author “has combined the symptoms of those outside in ch. iv (failing to see and hear, *blepein* and *akouein*) and ch. vii (failure to perceive and understand, *noein* and *synienai*) in his critical rejoinder to the ‘insiders.’”<sup>227</sup> Yet, if 8:16 is to be read as the disciples failing to comprehend Jesus' leaven warning, this incomprehension, as was argued above, does not stem from some defect in the disciples' intellectual abilities or from a lack of faith, but is an incomprehension born of resistance and opposition. According to this reading, Jesus' rebuke would be occasioned not simply by the disciples' failure to understand his leaven warning but at their hardness of heart, of which their incomprehension is a byproduct and symptom.

---

<sup>227</sup> Lemcio, “External Evidence,” 335.

That Jesus' rebuke in 8:17–21 is directed at something other than, or at least in addition to, the disciples' discussion in 8:16 is suggested by the presence of οὐπω in 8:17. According to the majority reading, in 8:17, Jesus questions the disciples' failure to perceive and understand his parabolic leaven warning, yet οὐπω counts against this reading. It simply would not make sense for Jesus to tell a parable and then, after the disciples' have made an initial response, exclaim, "Do you *not yet* perceive or understand [this parable]?" Instead, the presence of οὐπω indicates that Jesus' rebuking inquiries concern not so much the disciples' failure to understand the leaven parable but points to some other failure altogether, which, nevertheless, may account for their failure to comprehend his warning. In other words, the consensus reading is based on the assumption that the DNC of νοεῖτε and συνίετε (i.e., their required Topic and Content arguments, respectively),<sup>228</sup> is Jesus' leaven warning, but οὐπω counts against this. Moreover, it has already been established on other grounds that the DNC of συνίετε is ἐπὶ τοῖς ἄρτοις (and given the syntax of οὐπω νοεῖτε οὐδὲ συνίετε, the same can be said for νοεῖτε). Thus, according to this alternative reading, Jesus rebukes the disciples for not yet perceiving or understanding about the loaves, which first and foremost is directed at their refusal to bring several loaves with them on the boat (8:14) and only secondarily at their failure to comprehend Jesus' leaven warning (8:16), if indeed, their response in 8:16 is intended to convey incomprehension.

(2) Yet, there are reasons to question whether this is actually the best reading of the disciples' response in 8:16. First, in this study, we have already seen examples of scholars interpreting the negative characterization of the Markan disciples in terms of incomprehension when in fact resistance and opposition make better sense of the narrative. Once the reader has arrived at this climactic ESC, the disciples have exhibited both incomprehension and opposition, not just incomprehension. Consequently, commentators can no longer unreflectively assume that 8:16 is just one more example of the disciples' "chronic" incomprehension. Second, one of the primary reasons why commentators interpret the disciples' discussion in 8:16 as manifesting incomprehension is that Jesus' rebuke begins with two verbs of cognition, οὐπω νοεῖτε οὐδὲ συνίετε (8:17). Yet, as we have seen, οὐπω points beyond 8:16, and the DNC of both νοεῖτε and συνίετε is *about the loaves*, not Jesus' leaven warning. Thus, the formal similarities between ESC<sup>3</sup> and 4:1–20 and 7:14–23 are the only

---

<sup>228</sup> Danove, *Linguistics*, 195, 210.

remaining rationale for reading 8:16 in terms of incomprehension, but even here there are problems.

A synoptic comparison of these passages raises serious questions as to whether ESC<sup>3</sup> actually conforms to the didactic pattern of parable–incomprehension–rebuke–explanation. First, in 8:16 the disciples’ response to Jesus’ parabolic warning takes the form of a discussion amongst the disciples themselves whereas, in both 4:10 and 7:17, the disciples approach Jesus and ask him about the parable. Second, Jesus’ rebuke in 8:17–18 is significantly longer and more severe than either of his chastisements in 4:13 and 7:18. As Quesnell reasons:

If Mark’s meaning were that the disciples had failed to understand this single metaphor [i.e., the leaven parable], the full development he gives the point in Jesus’ final speech (17–21) would border on the absurd, whether in a naturalistic or in an editorial reading of the verses. . . . In an editorial reading . . . , it would be truly extraordinary that Mark suddenly devote so many words of the Lord to so simple a matter, when he has been so extremely sparing of words of the Lord up to this point—and indeed continues so through the rest of his gospel.<sup>229</sup>

This offers an additional rationale for rejecting the notion that Jesus’ rebuke in ESC<sup>3</sup> is occasioned by simple incomprehension. Finally, Jesus’ questions in 8:19–20 do not constitute an explanation,<sup>230</sup> at least not in the way that 4:14–20 and 7:18–23 do in their respective contexts. Thus, while there are some obvious similarities between these three episodes, ESC<sup>3</sup> does not exhibit the same formal didactic pattern that one finds in Mark 4 and 7.

Instead, ESC<sup>3</sup> “is developed under a basic pattern of controversy, similar to 2:1–12.”<sup>231</sup> Quesnell notes the following parallels. In each episode, the preliminary material culminates in a statement by Jesus (2:1–5; 8:14–15) that prompts his listeners to *discuss* (or *debate*) in their hearts or with one another (διαλογίζομαι, 2:6–7; 8:15). Becoming *aware* of this (ἐπιγνούς, 2:8; γνούς, 8:17), Jesus asks the respective parties, *Why are you discussing . . . ?* (τί . . . διαλογίζεσθε, 2:8; 8:17), and then exposes their errors with a series of questions (2:9; 8:17–21). Moreover, in both episodes, reference is made to the listeners’ hearts (2:6, 8; 8:17).<sup>232</sup> These formal similarities with 2:1–12 (along with the formal differences with Mark 4 and 7) suggest that ESC<sup>3</sup> is

---

<sup>229</sup> Quesnell, *Mind*, 114.

<sup>230</sup> Pace Lemcio, “External Evidence,” 330; Sellew, “Didactic Scenes,” 620.

<sup>231</sup> Quesnell, *Mind*, 111.

<sup>232</sup> Quesnell, *Mind*, 106.

better read as a controversy episode (not a didactic episode) and so points to the disciples' opposition to Jesus (not their incomprehension).

After all, when Jesus asks the scribes why they are discussing these things in their hearts (2:8), it is not because they have misunderstood his words to the paralytic. Quite the contrary, they understand very well that Jesus' pronouncement of forgiveness constitutes a claim to exercise divine prerogatives, "Why does this man speak thus? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins except God alone" (2:7). The scribes clearly understand the claim, they simply reject it. When Jesus questions them, he is not asking why they have misconstrued his pronouncement of forgiveness, as though his words implied something other than what they imagined. Instead, Jesus is asking them why they have failed to recognize and acknowledge that he has been granted the authority to forgive sins, which he then justifies by healing the paralytic. In short, when Jesus questions the scribes' deliberations, he is questioning their opposition to him, which has prompted their deliberations.

Likewise, when the disciples, after Jesus issues his warning, discuss not having loaves, it is not because they have misunderstood it. Quite the contrary, they understand very well that Jesus' warning about the leaven of Herod and of the Pharisees was issued because of their failure to bring several loaves with them on their return to Gentile space; this is what their deliberations indicates. When Jesus questions them, he is not asking them why they have misunderstood his warning, as though their talking about loaves misses the point entirely (as is the case in Matthew's version of this episode). Instead Jesus is asking why they continue in their persistent opposition to the Gentile mission; do they *not yet* understand *about the loaves*? The leaven warning and the rebuke are directed at the same object. Then, in an effort to break through their hardness of heart,<sup>233</sup> to open their eyes and ears to the reality that his extension of Israel's blessings to the Gentiles has God's endorsement, Jesus recalls the feedings in which two crowds, one Jewish and one Gentile, were both satisfied with just a few loaves, resulting in an overabundance of leftover loaves, a sign of divine authorization. Now, whereas the controversy in 2:1–12 ends with all being amazed and glorifying God (2:12), the controversy in ESC<sup>3</sup> ends rather ambiguously with Jesus' question, "Do you not understand?," that is, "Do you not understand *about the loaves*? (οὐπω συνίετε [ἐπὶ τοῖς ἄρτοις]; 8:21).

---

<sup>233</sup> "In the end . . . Jesus' questions in 8:19–20 are probably meant to be revelatory rather than obfuscatory, but it has to be admitted that they have often had the opposite effect" (Marcus, *Mark* 1–8, 513).

### *Obstacle to Gentile Mission*

We are now in a position to consider *why* the disciples might wish to thwart a second Gentile feeding. As in 6:52, so also in 8:17–18, the disciples are presented as not understanding about the loaves due to their hardness of heart, manifested here in their intentionally neglecting to take along loaves as they return to Gentile territory. So, what exactly is animating their hardness of heart on this occasion? Is it a new issue, or one we have encountered previously in the narrative?

In ESC<sup>2</sup>, the disciples' hardness of heart stemmed from their resistance to being subject to Gentile hospitality. Although Jesus subsequently removes any *legal* obstacles that might inhibit his disciples from engaging in this sort of apostolic mission to Gentiles (7:15), perhaps their Jewish sensibilities, informed over a lifetime of observance of traditional Jewish praxis, have remained essentially unaffected by Jesus' radical pronouncement. Such persistent resistance would certainly constitute hardness of heart and would fit Jesus' use of οὐπω (8:17, 21), yet it is unclear how attempting to thwart another Gentile feeding might relate to an unwillingness to receive Gentile hospitality.

A second possibility, essentially the inverse of the first, is that the disciples do not wish to once again be put in the role of household servants who wait and serve Gentiles, which is the role they played when distributing the broken loaves in the Gentile feeding. This would account for the disciples neglecting to take extra loaves, but nothing else in the episode seems to point in this direction.

A third possibility is related to the enigmatic exchange between Jesus and the Syrophoenician woman. Previously, I argued that, in Jesus' ironic reply to the woman's initial request, he was articulating not his own position but that of his disciples, which specifically concerned the *timing* of the mission to Gentiles in relation to the mission to Jews: "Let the children be satisfied *first*" (7:27). ESC<sup>3</sup> is the only other Markan episode that addresses the issue of feeding of both Jews and Gentiles with loaves. This creates the intriguing possibility that the disciples' attempt to thwart another Gentile feeding grows out of their concern over the relative timings of the Jewish and Gentile missions. How would this reading work?

As I have argued, the disciples intentionally neglect to take along loaves in an attempt to thwart a second Gentile feeding. Jesus responds with a stern warning in which he likens their opposition to that of the Pharisees and Herod followed by a se-

ries of rebuking questions in which he highlights their enduring failure to understand about the loaves due to their hardness of heart, their self-imposed blindness and deafness. Jesus then concludes by asking them to recall specific details from the Jewish and Gentile feedings, which is designed to break through the disciples' hardness of heart. So what does Jesus want the disciples to understand about the two feedings that addresses their desire to thwart Gentile mission?

To answer this question, it is important to notice where Jesus directs the disciples' attention. When recalling each of the feedings, while Jesus himself supplies the numbers of loaves broken and of people satisfied, he asks the disciples to supply the number of baskets of fragments they collected,<sup>234</sup> thereby drawing their (and the reader's) attention to the amount of leftovers following each feeding. So, to revise our question, what does Jesus want the disciples to understand about *the baskets of leftover loaves* that addresses their opposition to the Gentile mission?

Commentators have debated the significance of the numbers connected to the feedings, which has resulted in various theories attempting to explain their symbolic import.<sup>235</sup> While I remain open to the possibility that some of the numbers function symbolically, especially on the discourse plain, I am more inclined to regard them as serving in a non-symbolic capacity,<sup>236</sup> at least within the story world of the narrative. While Jesus' questions demand a numeric response, (i.e., twelve and seven), the numbers themselves are not what is important, as though changing them would affect what Jesus wants the disciples to understand. Instead, Jesus is directing the disciples' attention to the basic *fact* that each feeding concluded with an abundance of leftover loaves. So how does this fact address the disciples' active resistance to Gentile mission?

When discussing the feedings themselves, two conclusions were made regarding the meaning and significance of the leftover loaves. First, in both feedings, the leftover loaves reflect an abundance of eschatological proportions; they indicate that

---

<sup>234</sup> So also, Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 513.

<sup>235</sup> Some interesting, though ultimately unconvincing hypotheses, about the significance of these numbers are offered by: Countryman, "Baskets," 647–50; John Drury, "Understanding the Bread: Disruption and Aggregation, Secrecy and Revelation in Mark's Gospel," in *"Not in Heaven": Coherence and Complexity in Biblical Narrative* (Jason P. Rosenblatt and Joseph C. Sitterson Jr., 1991), 98–119; Tolbert, *Sowing*, 183.

<sup>236</sup> The "truth is that there is no fixed OT or Jewish symbolism either for five thousand or for four thousand, and that five, seven, and twelve can signify many different things" (Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 513).



the age of salvation has dawned.<sup>237</sup> Second, the leftovers following the Jewish feeding denote a surplus in God's eschatological blessings to Israel that is destined for others, in this case Gentiles. This is what the Syrophoenician woman, vis-à-vis the disciples, understood about the loaves, and herein lies an important clue.

The exchange between Jesus and the Syrophoenician woman has some interesting points of contact with Paul's discussion in Romans 9–11, in which Paul attempts to explain why so many Jews have rejected the gospel. Here, Paul defends God's purposes in election. Responding to the question, "Has God forsaken his promises to Israel, rejecting his people in favor of the Gentiles?," Paul says, "Absolutely not" (11:1), "for the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable" (11:29). In the end, Paul says, "all Israel will be saved" (11:26a), but in the interim, "a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles has come in" (11:25). This alternative timetable is in accordance with God's plans but has only just been revealed; it is a *μυστήριον* (11:25). With these words, Paul answers the concerns of his own people who are troubled by the influx of Gentile believers, concerns that seem to be rooted in the belief that, if God were to extend Israel's blessings to Gentiles, he would do so only after all within Israel have received their inheritance. After all, even Paul himself stresses Jewish priority in the economy of salvation, "*first* to the Jew and also to the Greek" (1:16; 2:9–10). Clearly, the priority of the Jewish people in salvation was a concern within first-century Jewish Christianity, a concern shared by Jesus' disciples, which finds expression in Jesus' response to the Syrophoenician woman, "Let the children be satisfied *first*, for it is not good to take the loaf of the children and throw it to the dogs" (7:27).

Consequently, just as Jesus, in rendering all foods clean, attempts to overcome the disciples' hardness of heart related to the *manner* of the Gentile mission, so also he attempts to overcome their hardness of heart related to the *timing* of the Gentile mission, first, by rewarding the Syrophoenician woman's understanding (7:29) and now by recalling certain details from the two feedings. That is, if Jesus' disciples are attempting to thwart another Gentile feeding because, in their estimation, the children have not yet been satisfied—the Pharisees being just one case in point—

---

<sup>237</sup> Marcus also sees the baskets of leftovers as signifying eschatological fullness, noting that in Jewish and Christian literature, twelve and seven are often associated with eschatological completion as are the words for fullness (*πλήρης*, *πλήρωμα*) used to describe the baskets of leftovers (8:19–20) (*Mark* 1–8, 514).

then Jesus, like Paul, offers an alternative timetable in which Gentiles are being fed before all of the children have been satisfied. Moreover, Jesus directs the disciples' attention to the baskets of leftovers because he wants them to contemplate the significance of the fact that *both* feedings produced an overabundance of loaves. First, he wants them to understand that the twelve baskets of loaves leftover from the Jewish feeding signify a surplus of God's salvific blessings for Israel that is intended for others, i.e., Gentiles, which both confirms the divine authorization of the Gentile mission and reminds the disciples that their apostolic commission includes Gentiles within its purview. If the same logic holds, the seven baskets of loaves leftover from the Gentile feeding would likewise point to a surplus of God's salvific blessings that is intended for others, presumably, the children who have not yet been satisfied. In short, I am suggesting that something akin to Paul's *μυστήριον* is operative in Mark. In highlighting the seven baskets from the Gentile feeding, Jesus is attempting to alleviate his disciples' concerns regarding the relative timing of the Jewish and Gentile missions, by drawing their attention to the fact that, even after the Gentiles were satisfied, an abundance of loaves still remained (cf. Rom 11:25–26).<sup>238</sup>

While somewhat speculative, this reading has the advantage of explaining a number of elements within the Markan narrative: (1) it would explain why, in 7:27, the concern is expressed that the children be satisfied *first*—a concern that is absent from Matthew's account; (2) why, in 8:4, the disciples question any possibility of feeding *these* people (i.e., the Gentile dogs) with *loaves* (i.e., that which belongs to the children)—another concern absent from Matthew's account; (3) why, in 8:14, the disciples intentionally neglect to take along several *loaves* in an effort to thwart another feeding of *those* people; (4) and why, in 8:19–20, Jesus focuses upon the leftover loaves from the two feedings. To summarize, by drawing the disciples' attention to the leftover loaves following both feedings, Jesus is addressing the underlying

---

<sup>238</sup> If this reading is accurate, it raises an interesting, and potentially significant, question that unfortunately cannot be explored here. Does “the *μυστήριον* of the kingdom of God” that the disciples have been given in 4:11 bear any relation to the *μυστήριον* Paul discloses? That is, does it have anything to do with the relations between the Jewish and Gentile missions? In support of this possibility is that the Markan reference to *μυστήριον* occurs in the opening episode of a movement in which mission to Gentiles is a featured element. ESC<sup>3</sup> may not use the word, *μυστήριον*, but it does employ language reminiscent of 4:11–12 where *μυστήριον* occurs. Furthermore, in Romans 11, the language of hardness occurs (11:7, 25) in conjunction with Gentile salvation, and Romans 11:8 is a conflation of OT texts, one of which seems to be portions of Isaiah 6:9, which we find in Mark 4:12 and 8:18. If a relationship could be established between Mark's *μυστήριον* and Paul's *μυστήριον*, this would corroborate my reading 8:19–20 as Jesus' response to the disciples' concern over the chronology of salvation.

causes of the their hardness of heart with respect to Gentile mission. The leftover loaves should demonstrate not only that God has authorized Jesus and his apostolic representatives to invite Gentiles to partake of Israel's inheritance but also that God's salvation is more than sufficient to fully satisfy both Jews and Gentiles, and so should alleviate any concerns regarding Jewish privilege and priority occasioned by the timing of the Gentile mission.

#### MARK 14:12–25, THIS LOAF IS MY BODY

	12	...	22	23	24	25
ἄζυμος	×					
λαμβάνω			×	×		
ἄρτος			×			
εὐλογέω			×			
κλάω			×			
δίδωμι			×	×		
ποτήριον				×		
εὐχαριστέω				×		

**Figure 6–24: Members of The Loaves Motif in Mark 14:12–25**

The last principal carrier of The Loaves motif is Mark 14:12–25, which narrates Jesus' final meal, a Passover, with his disciples. This episode comprises three scenes: the preparations for Passover (12–16), Jesus' announcement that one of the twelve will betray him (17–21), and Jesus' re-interpretation of Passover in terms of his own suffering and death (22–25). Ten of the episodes' eleven cluster elements occur in the final scene, and so it is with this scene that we are concerned. In this scene, the disciples play no active role; at most, they are passive recipients, and so the scene is entirely focused upon Jesus, upon his words and actions that manifest his identity and authority.

Once again, Jesus is cast in the role of host. In 14:13, he instructs his disciples regarding the preparations for eating the Passover, and in 14:22–23, his actions with the loaf and the cup are what might be expected of a paterfamilias or banquet host. There has been much discussion over whether Jesus' last meal with his disciples was, in fact, a Passover, but this sort of historical debate goes beyond the scope of our literary investigation. Likewise, ever since Jeremias published his reconstruction of first-

century Jewish Passover practices,<sup>239</sup> there has been much speculation regarding the relationship between the loaf and the cup in Mark to what took place during a typical seder. For example, which of the four cups of wine does the cup in Mark correspond to? Yet, even if Jeremias' reconstruction is accurate, which many now doubt,<sup>240</sup> the Markan narrative does not provide sufficient detail to make such determinations. Nevertheless, the scene is suitably detailed to invest Jesus' actions with unique significance. Jesus' actions and words over the loaf and the cup are not unusual given that "the various aspects of the Passover meal itself involved deep symbolism."<sup>241</sup> "Just as the food of the seder has traditionally been interpreted, so does Jesus now interpret the food before him."<sup>242</sup> What is striking is the particular symbolism Jesus ascribes to the loaf and cup.

Here, Jesus performs two parallel sets of actions. First, he takes a loaf and offers a blessing, and then breaks it and gives it to his disciples (14:22a). Second, he takes a cup and offers thanks, and then gives it to his disciples (14:23a). Following each set of actions, he offers an explanation that begins, *τοῦτό ἐστιν* (14:22c, 23c; Figure 6–25).

14:22a	<u>καὶ ἐσθιόντων αὐτῶν</u> <u>λαβὼν ἄρτον εὐλογήσας</u> ἔκλασεν καὶ <u>ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς</u>
14:23a	<u>καὶ λαβὼν ποτήριον εὐχαριστήσας</u> <u>ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς</u> , καὶ ἔπιον ἐξ αὐτοῦ πάντες.
14:22b	<u>καὶ εἶπεν·</u>
14:23b	<u>καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς·</u>
14:22c	λάβετε, <u>τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου.</u>
14:23c	<u>τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου</u> τῆς διαθήκης τὸ ἐκχυννόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν.

**Figure 6–25: Horizontal-Line Synopsis of Jesus' Actions with the Loaf and the Cup**

Many commentators locate these actions within the category of prophetic symbolic actions,<sup>243</sup> understanding them as parabolic acts or as efficacious symbolic acts,<sup>244</sup>

<sup>239</sup> Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*.

<sup>240</sup> "We should also, however, seriously reckon—as most NT scholars have not—with the possibility that the seder service known to us from the Mishnah took much of its present shape after AD 70, so that we should not expect correspondence with the synoptic accounts" (Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:469). So also, Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 398.

<sup>241</sup> Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew* (2 vols.; WBC 33; Dallas: Word Books, 1993–1995), 2:772.

<sup>242</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:469.

<sup>243</sup> E.g., Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20* (WBC 34b; Dallas: Word Books, 2001), 389.

<sup>244</sup> Norman A. Beck, "The Last Supper as an Efficacious Symbolic Act," *JBL* 89 (1970): 192–98.

analogous to Ezekiel's hair (Ezek 5:1–17), Jeremiah's jar (Jer 19:1–15), and Isaiah's nakedness (Isa 20:1–6). Yet, there is a key difference between Jesus' actions here and those of these OT prophets, namely, that theirs are out of the ordinary while Jesus' are in keeping with his role as seder host. Again, what is striking about Jesus' actions is not so much the actions themselves as the symbolic significance Jesus assigns to the loaf and the cup in his explanations. "While everything up to these words could be reckoned part of a conventional Passover meal, 'This is my body' introduces something new."<sup>245</sup>

In its own way, each explanation points to the reality and meaning of Jesus' upcoming death. When Jesus says of the loaf, τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου (14:22), he is identifying the loaf with his soon-to-be dead body; in this final narrative movement σῶμα always denotes Jesus' corpse (14:8; 15:43, 45 v.l.).<sup>246</sup> That Jesus speaks these words over a broken loaf might prefigure the violence of his death, but, given that the breaking of a loaf is necessary for its distribution,<sup>247</sup> the more likely interpretation is that the disciples, by sharing in the broken loaf, "somehow become participants in Jesus' own destiny,"<sup>248</sup> either by receiving the benefits of his death (cf. 10:45; 14:24) or by sharing in his fate (cf. 8:34; 10:38–39; 13:11), or perhaps both. Likewise, when Jesus says of the cup, τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης τὸ ἐκχυννόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν (14:23), he is identifying the cup of wine with his death, and the fact that all of Jesus' disciples drink from the cup signifies their participation in his fate. In support of this reading are Jesus' words to James and John, "The cup that I drink you will drink," where the cup represents Jesus' fateful suffering and death (10:39).

It is significant that the words spoken over the cup are more extensive than those spoken over the loaf. Given the parallel between 14:22 and 14:23, one might have expected a simple, τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου. Instead, τὸ αἷμά μου is qualified by τῆς διαθήκης and τὸ ἐκχυννόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν, which together function as a two-step progression that explains the significance not only of the cup but the loaf as well, with which it is in parallel. Both expressions recall other texts. On the one hand, "poured out *for many*" (ὑπὲρ πολλῶν, 14:23) recalls Jesus' statement that the Son of Man came "to give his life as a ransom *for many*" (ἀντὶ πολλῶν, 10:45). Some

<sup>245</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:470.

<sup>246</sup> LaVerdiere, *Beginning*, 2:236. Outside this movement, σῶμα only occurs once (5:29).

<sup>247</sup> Gundry, *Mark*, 840.

<sup>248</sup> Boring, *Mark*, 391.

also see an allusion to Isaiah 53:12, “he bore the sins of *many*” (πολλῶν), suggesting perhaps that “Jesus in his death is the suffering servant of Isaiah.”<sup>249</sup>

On the other hand, τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης points to Zechariah 9:11 (ἐν αἵματι διαθήκης; דְּבַר־חַיִּיתִי) and/or Exodus 24:8 (ἰδοὺ τὸ αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης; הִנֵּה דָם־הַבְּרִית), the only occurrences of the expression, *the blood of the covenant*, in the OT (cf. Heb 9:20; 10:29; 13:20, which all evoke Exod 24:8). Zechariah 9:11 is suggestive because it follows 9:9–10 with its reference to Jerusalem’s triumphant and victorious king humbly riding upon a donkey, which brings to mind the manner of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem (Mark 11:1–11), although only in Matthew is Jesus’ entry *explicitly* linked to Zechariah 9:9 (Matt 21:4–5). In any case, the reference to *the blood of the covenant* in Zechariah 9:11 harks back to the ratification of the Mosaic covenant in Exodus 24:1–11. Here, at the foot of Mt. Sinai, an altar is constructed, sacrifices performed, and half of the blood dashed against the altar. Moses reads the book of the covenant to the people, and they renew their commitment to be obedient to all that YHWH has spoken. Then, *taking* the remaining blood (λαβών; Exod 24:8a; cf. Mark 14:23a), Moses dashes it on the people with these words, “Behold, the blood of the covenant” (Exod 24:8c), which is essentially the words of Jesus spoken over the cup of wine, “This is my blood of the covenant” (Mark 14:24).<sup>250</sup> Moreover, the grammatical structure of Exodus 24:8 and Mark 14:23–24 is remarkably similar. In each, the acting agent takes (participle) an object (accusative), distributes it to the participants with an action (aorist indicative) appropriate to each object, and identifies the object with the blood of the covenant (Figure 6–26).

<b>Exod 24:8a</b>	λαβών δὲ Μωσὴς τὸ αἷμα
<b>Mark 14:23a</b>	καὶ λαβών ποτήριον εὐχαριστήσας
<b>Exod 24:8b</b>	κατεσκέδασεν τοῦ λαοῦ
<b>Mark 14:23b</b>	ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς, καὶ ἔπιον ἐξ αὐτοῦ πάντες.
<b>Exod 24:8c</b>	καὶ εἶπεν ἰδοὺ τὸ αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης
<b>Mark 14:23c</b>	καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης

**Figure 6–26: Horizontal-Line Synopsis of Exodus 24:8 and Mark 14:24**

In short, the parallels between these two scenes supports the view that Jesus’ words over the cup are intentionally evocative of those spoken during the ratification of the

<sup>249</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:465.

<sup>250</sup> Cf. Tg. Onq, “This is the blood of the covenant” (Evans, *Mark*, 393).

Mosaic covenant. The Passover context in which these words are uttered offers additional support, given the relationship between first-century Passover celebrations and the establishment of the covenant at Sinai, not to mention that, following the ratification of the covenant, Moses and Israel's elders share a meal in the presence of God, eating and drinking as they behold the presence of God (Exod 24:11). These connections between Mark 14 and Exodus 24 suggest that Jesus understands his death either as the foundation of a new covenant<sup>251</sup> that supersedes the Mosaic covenant<sup>252</sup> or, given the absence of any reference to a *new* covenant (cf. Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25), as the renewal, confirmation, fulfillment, and/or recapitulation of the Mosaic covenant.<sup>253</sup> In either case, in his words over the loaf and the cup, Jesus is presenting his own death as possessing salvific significance.

Moreover, given that Jesus' actions with the loaf and cup, in both vocabulary and sequence, parallel his actions with the loaves in the two feeding episodes (Figure 6–27), the two other occasions in Mark when Jesus hosts a meal, raises the possibility that, in Mark, the significance of Jesus' death is integrally related to the significance of his feeding the two crowds, the one Jewish and the one Gentile.

<b>6:41a</b>	<u>καὶ</u>	<u>λαβὼν</u> τοὺς πέντε ἄρτους καὶ τοὺς δύο ἰχθύας . . .
<b>14:22a</b>	<u>καὶ</u> ἐσθιόντων αὐτῶν	<u>λαβὼν</u> ἄρτον
<b>8:6a</b>	<u>καὶ</u>	<u>λαβὼν</u> τοὺς ἑπτὰ ἄρτους
<b>14:23a</b>	<u>καὶ</u>	<u>λαβὼν</u> ποτήριον
<b>6:41b</b>	εὐλόγησεν καὶ κατέκλασεν τοὺς ἄρτους	<u>καὶ ἐδίδου τοῖς μαθηταῖς [αὐτοῦ]</u>
<b>14:22a</b>	<u>εὐλογήσας</u>	<u>ἔκλασεν</u> καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς
<b>8:6b</b>	<u>εὐχαριστήσας</u>	<u>ἔκλασεν</u> καὶ ἐδίδου τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ
<b>14:23b</b>	<u>εὐχαριστήσας</u>	ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς

**Figure 6–27: Horizontal-Line Synopsis of Mark 6:41, 8:6, and 14:22–23**

As elements within the Passover seder—which commemorates the historic Exodus, *the* event of national rescue, even as it envisions a New Exodus, *the* hope for eschatological renewal—the loaf and cup symbolize Israel's eschatological salvation just as the loaves in the feedings do. Moreover, the leftover loaves embody the motif of eschatological abundance, which, as we saw, includes the motif of Gentile inclusion

<sup>251</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:472.

<sup>252</sup> Moloney, *Mark*, 287.

<sup>253</sup> Boring, *Mark*, 391; John Koenig, *The Feast of the World's Redemption: Eucharistic Origins and Christian Mission* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2000), 174.

within Israel's eschatological salvation, two motifs which recur in conjunction with the loaf and the cup. Rendered literally, ὑπὲρ πολλῶν means, *for many*, but here it is to be understood as a Semitic idiom meaning, *for all*;<sup>254</sup> in other words, ὑπὲρ πολλῶν possesses a comprehensive, not restrictive, meaning.<sup>255</sup> Consequently, Jesus' blood (i.e., his death, which is symbolized by the cup of wine), is abundantly efficacious as the foundation of the covenant, for it is poured out *for all* (ὑπὲρ πολλῶν, 14:24) and *all* drink of it (πάντες, 14:23).

That Gentiles, as well as Jews, are subsumed within the *all* as is implied via the evocation of each of these meals through the employment of the HOST microcluster. The use of εὐλογέω with the loaf recalls both meals for εὐλογέω occurs in both (6:41; 8:7), while the use of εὐχαριστέω with the cup recalls the Gentile meal specifically, the only other place εὐχαριστέω occurs in Mark (8:6). This view is confirmed in the climactic recognition scene of the gospel, where a Gentile centurion, upon seeing the death of Jesus, becomes the only human character within the entire narrative to recognize Jesus' divine identity as the Son of God (15:39). By linking Jesus' last meal (in which the Passover event is reinterpreted in terms of his own death) with the Jewish and Gentile meals (in which Israel's salvation is portrayed as an abundance for others), the Markan narrative presents Jesus' death as the means by which God will execute and dispense Israel's salvation and inheritance, the blessings of which are of such abundance that even those beyond the borders of Israel—be they, geographic, ethnic, or cultural—will participate in it.

### CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE LOAVES MOTIF

As we have seen, The Loaves motif makes a number of contributions to the Markan narrative, especially in terms of the characterizations of Jesus and of his disciples.

#### THE CHARACTERIZATION OF JESUS

By means of The Loaves motif, Jesus is portrayed as one who has both the divine ability and authority to feed those who are in need. Jesus hosts banquets for large crowds of people, both Jews and Gentiles. Jesus also feeds individuals; he commands a Jewish couple to give their daughter something to eat (5:43), and he grants a Gen-

<sup>254</sup> Moloney, *Mark*, 286. So also ἀντὶ πολλῶν in Mark 10:45.

<sup>255</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:474; Nineham, *Mark*, 386.



tile mother's little daughter the privilege of partaking of the children's loaf (7:29). Jesus also feeds his own disciples, permitting them to harvest grain on the sabbath (2:23), allowing them to eat loaves with unwashed hands (7:2), rendering all foods clean (7:19), and, ultimately, giving up his life for them, represented in the loaf and the cup that he gives them (14:22–23).

The *bread* Jesus feeds to those in need comes in many forms: a loaf, loaves, pieces, crumbs, and grain, and this bread is linked with the principal activities of Jesus' vocation: exorcising, teaching, healing, and dying. Jesus feeds the five and four thousand after having taught them (6:34; implied in 8:2). His exorcism of the Syro-phoenician woman's daughter is an example of the dogs eating the children's crumbs, as is his subsequent healing of a deaf and mute Gentile. And again, his death is represented by the loaf he breaks and distributes to his disciples during his last meal.

Furthermore, this *bread* Jesus supplies, which represents the blessings and salvation of God, is sufficient and exceedingly abundant. With just a few loaves, Jesus is able to feed crowds of thousands and still have more bread leftover than what he began with. Likewise, Jesus' teaching can sustain hungry crowds late into the day (6:35) or even for three days (8:2). This bread is so extraordinary that crumbs are more than adequate to satisfy those in need (7:28). Even Jesus' solitary death, the broken loaf, is efficacious for all (10:45; 14:23b–24).

#### THE CHARACTERIZATION OF THE DISCIPLES

On the other hand, by means of The Loaves motif, the disciples are portrayed as those who are not only fed (see above) but called by Jesus to participate in his ministry of feeding others. Jesus defends his own disciples' transgression of the sabbath by appealing to David's need and hunger as the justification for his unlawful actions of eating and sharing the Loaves of Presentation, establishing a principle and precedence of compassionate regard for the needs of others. Out of compassion, Jesus teaches the Jewish crowd of five thousand (6:34), and the disciples manifest this same compassion by approaching Jesus with their concerns about the remoteness of the location and the lateness of the hour (6:35). Yet, when they are called upon to feed Gentiles, they exhibit only resistance. Even after Jesus removes fundamental religious and cultural boundaries separating Jews from Gentiles (7:19), the disciples manifest no compassion for Gentiles, questioning the possibility that Gentile dogs could be fed with

the children's loaves (8:4), this after Jesus explicitly expresses his own compassion for the Gentile crowd (8:2–3), and then attempting to thwart a second Gentile feeding by not taking loaves along with them (8:14).

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# THE NARRATIVE LOGIC OF THE DISCIPLES' (IN)COMPREHENSION



In Chapter One, we saw that the characterization of the Markan disciples has been and continues to be the object of much scholarly reflection and speculation. For many, the Markan author's presentation of Jesus' disciples holds a key, if not *the* key, to unlocking the purpose and function of the gospel as a whole. While commentators differ over whether the disciples ultimately serve a pedagogical, pastoral, or polemical function, commentators generally agree that the Markan disciples come off rather badly, especially when compared to their counterparts in the other canonical gospels.

In this study, I have focused on the Sea Crossing movement where the disciples come off badly indeed. At the beginning of the movement the disciples are presented as insiders; they are granted the mystery of the kingdom (4:11) and are the recipients of Jesus' private instruction (4:34). And, over the course of the movement, they often appear as insiders; for example, they are Jesus' constant companions, and they complete a successful apostolic mission (6:30). Yet, by movement's end, the Markan disciples appear almost as outsiders. While they never fully lose their insider status (e.g., they remain with Jesus, and Jesus still attempts to explain things to them), they are increasingly portrayed with images and language normally reserved for outsiders; they are blind, deaf, and hard of heart.

On the whole, commentators have interpreted the disciples' negative characterization in this movement in terms of lack of faith and/or incomprehension, and certainly, these elements belong to the picture. But neither of these, nor a combination of the two, fully accounts for the severity of language used of the disciples by the

narrator and Jesus (6:52; 8:17–18). Taking as its starting point Gibson’s argument that the harshness of Jesus’ rebuke in ESC<sup>3</sup> is occasioned not by the disciples’ lack of faith or incomprehension, but by their active resistance to his Gentile mission, this study has made a fresh investigation of possible evidence for resistance on the part of the Markan disciples, which would offer a better account of the negative portrait of the disciples that emerges over the course of the Sea Crossing movement.<sup>1</sup> Preliminary investigations identified places in the narrative that displayed potential signs of resistance on the part of the disciples, many of which occurred in episodes where ἄρτος, θάλασσα, and/or πλοῖον played a significant role. Thus, in attending to the Sea Crossing and The Loaves motifs in Mark, this study has established additional evidence of the disciples’ resistance, leading to the conclusion that, *within the Sea Crossing movement, the Markan disciples manifest resistance to Jesus’ Gentile mission and to their participation in it*. The following reading of Mark 4:1–8:26 draws together the major findings upon which this conclusion is based.

## THE NARRATIVE LOGIC OF THE DISCIPLES’ INCOMPREHENSION

### THE SEA CROSSING MOVEMENT

#### MARK 4:1–6:44, PRELUDE TO RESISTANCE

In the Sea Crossing movement, Jesus’ disciples are portrayed both positively and negatively. Within the first two-thirds of the movement (4:1–6:44), their characterization is mixed. On the one hand, they are granted the mystery of the kingdom (4:11), and they receive private instruction (4:11, 34), yet they do not know the par-

---

<sup>1</sup> Since my review in Chapter One of major scholarly treatments of the Markan disciples, I have come across a few commentators who do regard the Markan disciples as manifesting some level of resistance to Gentile mission (most notably, Iverson, *Gentiles*, 40, 82, 91–97; LaVerdiere, *Eucharist*, 57; Malbon, “Jesus,” 372–73; Smith, “Bethsaida via Gennesaret,” 373–74; Wefald, “Separate Gentile Mission,” 19–20). On the whole, however, these references to the disciples’ resistance to Gentile mission are limited to a few sentences or a single paragraph, there being no detailed discussion or sustained argument on the topic. Moreover, none, save Iverson, characterize the disciples’ resistance in terms of *purposeful* resistance or *willful* opposition, which is to be attributed to the fact that only Iverson follows Gibson in regarding the disciples’ *neglecting* to take several loaves in 8:14 as a deliberate attempt to thwart additional outpourings of salvific favors upon Gentiles. Published in 2007, Iverson’s study only became available to me in the latter stages of my research and writing, and I have been gratified by the number of points of correspondence between our overall readings of the Sea Crossing movement, not to mention other parts of the Markan narrative that my study does not address. While our studies differ in their focus, their scope, and in numerous of their details, emphases, and conclusions, the points of correspondence between them on the matter of the disciples’ relationship to Gentile mission only serve to substantiate both studies, not to mention to corroborate Gibson’s contributions regarding the nature of Jesus’ rebuke of the disciples in ESC<sup>3</sup>.

able of the sower, which is foundational to knowing all the parables (4:13), and they exhibit faithlessness, cowardice, and fear when battered about by a stormy sea (4:40–41). In one episode, they carry out a successful apostolic mission (6:13, 30),<sup>2</sup> while in the very next, they are at a loss on how to feed a large crowd comprised of the same sort of people they had just exorcised, healed, and taught (6:37). Beginning with ESC<sup>2</sup>, the depiction of the disciples takes a decidedly negative turn and remains uniformly negative until the end of the movement.<sup>3</sup> Not coincidentally, this change in the characterization of the disciples coincides with the first sign of their resistance to Gentile mission.

#### MARK 6:45–8:21, CYCLE OF RESISTANCE

##### *Mark 6:45–52*

In 6:45, Jesus sends his disciples forth on the second stage of their apostolic mission, this time to Gentiles. They resist, for the guidelines governing their conduct whilst on mission (6:8–10) would require them to rely upon Gentiles for their food and shelter. This offends their Jewish sensibilities, ingrained through a lifetime of Torah observance. Consequently, Jesus must *compel* them to embark for Gentile Bethsaida (6:45).

---

<sup>2</sup> Following Moloney (“Mark 6:6b–30: Mission, the Baptist, and Failure,” *CBQ* 63 (2001): 660), Iverson argues that 6:30 recasts the disciples’ successful apostolic mission in a negative light. “Focusing on their own achievements, the disciples provide no indication that they have understood the source of their spiritual power. The Twelve report to Jesus ‘all *they* had done and all that *they* had taught’” (*Gentiles*, 92). In short, the Twelve do not give Jesus due credit for their success, but this seems to be reading too much into 6:30. Nothing in the narrative indicates that the reader is expected to interpret 6:30 as an aspersion upon the disciples; for example, neither Jesus nor the narrator rebukes or chastises them. Moloney claims that the use of ἀπαγγέλλω points to the disciples’ sense of self-importance because it is “a strong verb, generally used in contexts of public revelation” (660). Yet, in Mark, ἀπαγγέλλω simply means to *report* something that has happened (5:14, 19); and in 5:19–20, ἀπαγγέλλω is contrasted with the much stronger κηρύσσω. If 6:30 had employed κηρύσσω, Moloney might have an argument. Moreover, in their English translations, both Moloney and Iverson italicize the subject and repeat it: all *they* had done and all that *they* had taught. This creates an emphasis that is not present in the Greek of 6:30, which does not employ an emphatic subject pronoun. For their reading, one might also have expected 6:30b to be in first, not third person. Finally, that the disciples are explicitly identified as οἱ ἀπόστολοι in 6:30, the only undisputed occurrence of ἀπόστολος in Mark (its presence in 3:14 is suspect), counts against Moloney’s assertion that the Twelve “are losing the sense of being the ‘sent ones’ of Jesus” (*Mark: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2004), 163). As it is, 6:30 is simply a straightforward, descriptive statement designed to enclose 6:14–29 within a frame comprised of 6:7–13 and 6:30 and to reintroduce the disciples back into the narrative after their having been sent out.

<sup>3</sup> “It is with this journey, which does not attain its stated goal, that a series of misunderstandings on the part of the disciples begins (6,52; 7,18; 8,4; 8,14–21). When Jesus and the disciples finally arrive at Bethsaida (8,22), this series of misunderstandings concludes” (Matera, “Incomprehension,” 168). So also Svartvik, *Mark and Mission*, 270, 73.

Additional signs of their resistance appear throughout the episode: in their inability to make progress against an adverse wind (6:48), in their arrival at Jewish Gennesaret (6:53), and most explicitly, in the narrator's ascribing their maritime failures to their inability to understand the significance of the leftover loaves, itself a symptom of their hardened hearts (6:52). Had the disciples not been opposed to engaging in Gentile mission, they would have understood that the leftover loaves they collected following the Jewish meal signified an overflowing abundance of God's salvific blessings for Israel destined for those living beyond Israel's ethnic, religious, and cultural borders, symbolized by the Sea of Galilee.<sup>4</sup> In the face of such resistance, the mission to Bethsaida is abandoned. While the Markan Jesus may exercise absolute authority over nature and demonic entities, he never does so over human agents. So, instead of forcing his disciples to complete their second tour of duty, Jesus begins addressing the causes that underlie their resistance to Gentile mission.

#### *Mark 7:1–23*

Almost immediately after the aborted crossing to Bethsaida, Jesus engages in a public debate with scribes and Pharisees over matters of ritual and moral purity (7:1–23). In that debate, Jesus declares that nothing entering a person from the outside is able to defile a person (7:15). According to the narrator, with this parabolic word, Jesus effectively renders all foods clean (7:19), thereby removing a key obstacle to Gentile mission. If all foods are now clean, the disciples can, in good conscience, engage in an apostolic mission to Gentiles in accordance with the guidelines Jesus established in 6:8–10. In short, Jesus' Jewish disciples are now free, from a legal standpoint, to accept Gentile hospitality.

#### *Mark 7:24–30*

After establishing this new state of affairs regarding kosher regulations and practices, Jesus immediately makes his way into Gentile geopolitical space (7:24). If the disciples are unwilling or unable *to go before* him on Gentile mission (προάγειν, 6:45), then Jesus will show them the way. In the first episode (7:24–30), the disciples show no signs of resistance. Although they have clearly accompanied Jesus (cf. 8:1), they are not even mentioned in this episode. Instead, responding to the Syrophoenician woman's

---

<sup>4</sup> Kelber, *Kingdom*, 62–63; Malbon, "Jesus," 364, 375.

request for healing for her daughter, the Markan Jesus gives voice to a heretofore undisclosed objection the disciples harbor regarding Gentile mission, namely, that it is not right to permit unclean Gentile dogs to partake of the blessings that rightfully belong to the holy children of Israel, at least not before the children have all received their due portion (7:27).

Jesus' surprising and ironic statement functions in a manner similar to that of the narrator's intrusions in 6:52 and 7:19b, to guide the reader's perceptions regarding the disciples' behavior and attitudes regarding Gentile mission. Though a minor character, the Syrophoenician woman understands the significance of the leftover loaves, vis-à-vis the disciples. She observes that, while Gentiles may be dogs in the economy of salvation, they are of the domestic, not scavenging, variety (7:28a). Moreover, Gentiles have already begun to experience the benefits of Israel's eschatological blessings, but not at the expense of any within Israel, for the Gentiles have been quite satisfied with the leftover crumbs (7:28b). Interestingly, at this point in the narrative, this parabolic exchange between Jesus and this Syrophoenician woman is not for the disciples' benefit, as was the purity parable in 7:15, but for the reader's benefit. Later on, Jesus will take up this particular objection to Gentile mission with his disciples in the final sea crossing. Here, this exchange anticipates future manifestations of the disciples' resistance (specifically, 8:4 and 8:14), thus providing the reader a framework within which to understand the disciples' increasingly active opposition to Gentile mission.

#### *Mark 8:1–9*

From here, Jesus leads his disciples on a circuitous journey throughout Gentile space (7:31). The next hint of resistance to Gentile mission occurs in connection with the Gentile meal (8:1–9). In contrast to the Jewish meal, the disciples display no compassion for the crowd, despite its having been without food for three days (8:2), not just a single afternoon (6:35). When Jesus communicates his concern for the crowd's well-being (8:2–3), the disciples question any possibility of satisfying *these* people in the wilderness (8:4). How could anyone feed these Gentile dogs with loaves, the food that belongs to the Jews and which is reminiscent of the manna that sustained the children of Israel in their wilderness sojourn? Having participated in the first feeding, the disciples fully understand the course of action Jesus' stated concerns imply; they simply balk at

the idea. Here, the Markan disciples exhibit not an “incomprehensible incomprehension,”<sup>5</sup> as is often assumed, but a derogatory antagonism to Gentile mission.

#### *Mark 8:13–21*

Soon thereafter, the disciples’ opposition becomes calculated and preemptive as they seek to thwart a second Gentile meal by intentionally neglecting to take along several loaves on their return to the eastern shore (8:14). Such persistent and willful opposition elicits from Jesus a stern warning (8:15) and an even sterner rebuke (8:17–18). The disciples are dangerously close to being on the same side of the divide as Jesus’ opponents, who are seeking his life. To actively oppose that which is fundamental to Jesus’ messianic vocation—here, Gentile mission—is in effect to question his messianic identity and authority. Like outsiders, the disciples have become blind and deaf; their hardness of heart regarding Gentile mission has rendered them incapable of perceiving the meaning and significance of the leftover loaves. Jesus attempts to break through their hardness of heart, to open their eyes and unstop their ears, by taking up their unspoken concern that Gentile mission would have an adverse effect on Jews, the concern which Jesus gave voice to in 7:27.

In drawing their attention to the fact that a surplus of leftover loaves was generated by both feedings (8:19–20), Jesus is trying to get them to see that *both* missions, not just the Jewish mission, have divine authorization for *both* feedings manifest the sort of eschatological abundance that can only be attributed to God. The leftover loaves following the Jewish meal are a sign of God’s favorable intentions toward Gentiles. More importantly, at least as regards the disciples’ present concerns, the leftover loaves following the Gentile meal demonstrate that feeding Gentiles does not produce a shortfall in God’s blessings for Israel. Even if the dogs were to eat of the children’s loaf before all the children have had their share, the disciples need not worry; the salvation that God offers and of which Jesus is the authorized agent is more than adequate to satisfy both Jews and Gentiles.

#### *Conclusion*

This study has shown the multiple manifestations of resistance on the part of the Markan disciples, which form a cycle of resistance (6:45–8:21) within the Sea Cross-

---

<sup>5</sup> Svartvik, *Mark and Mission*, 296.



ing movement, that is, a sequence of episodes in which the disciples' resistance to Gentile mission is a dominant, recurrent motif. Over the course of the cycle, the disciples move from bad to worse, from passive resistance to active opposition, and thus the cycle ends with Jesus' ambiguous question to the disciples, οὐπω συνίετε; (8:21). The reader is left wondering, will the disciples come to understand about the loaves, or will their hearts remain resistant to Jesus' Gentile mission and their participation in it?

### THE NARRATIVE LOGIC OF THE DISCIPLES' COMPREHENSION

So, does this question with which Jesus concludes the final Markan sea crossing receive an answer? If so, when and how? Some point to The Way movement (8:27–10:52), which is structured around three cycles of Jesus' teachings and the disciples' misunderstandings, as evidence that they remain without understanding. Others point to the final movement, where the disciples abandon Jesus, as additional evidence that they never gain understanding. Some even claim that Peter's confession in 8:27–30 is completely flawed, just one more example, in a long line, of the disciples' complete lack of understanding. Of course, how one interprets οὐπω συνίετε; (8:21) within its narrative context greatly affects how one determines whether, when, and how it gets answered. The fact is, Mark requires a lot from his readers, for he prefers to influence readers' perceptions and evaluations of plot and character through showing rather than telling.<sup>6</sup> Real readers must, therefore, be attuned to the multiple, varied, and often subtle, ways in which the Markan narrator guides the implied reader.

I have argued that what the disciples have not understood and what Jesus asks in 8:21 specifically concerns *the loaves*, which is directly related to the matter of Gentile mission, but whatever problems and misunderstandings the disciples manifest in Part II, they do not concern the loaves.<sup>7</sup> For example, in The Way movement, the

<sup>6</sup> On Mark's proclivity for showing versus telling, see Malbon, "Narrative Criticism," 35; Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 46.

<sup>7</sup> At least, the misunderstandings do not concern the loaves *directly*. As I shall argue below, the matter of the disciples' resistance to Gentile mission is resolved by the end of the Sea Crossing movement. Consequently, with the advent of The Way movement, there arises a new issue standing in the way of the disciples' fulfillment of their apostolic vocation. If the Sea Crossing movement with its focus upon the disciples' resistance to Gentile mission thematizes what it means for the disciples *to be sent out* by Jesus (3:14b), then The Way movement with its focus upon the way of suffering and death thematizes what it means for the disciples *to be with* Jesus (3:14a). Given that these two movements overlap (4:1–8:30; 8:27–10:52), it may be that these two themes overlap. That the disciples' vocation to become fishers of persons relates to their being called to take up their crosses and follow Jesus finds support in 13:9–10, which implies that, in the future, the disciples will be persecuted as a direct result of their engaging in apostolic mission, which will involve proclaiming the gospel to Gentiles (13:10a).

disciples' misunderstandings concern Jesus as the suffering Messiah, a "set of misunderstandings . . . distinct from [the] series which centers on the feeding miracles."<sup>8</sup> I would contend, then, that Jesus' question in 8:21 is answered immediately and that the two subsequent episodes reveal the disciples as finally having come to understand about the loaves. This assertion is based upon their arrival at Bethsaida (8:22a), Jesus' restoration of the blind Bethsaidaian's sight (8:22b–26), and most importantly, Peter's recognition of Jesus' messianic identity (8:27–30). Each of these in its own way serves as a sign of the disciples' comprehension, which indicates that they have abandoned their hardened resistance to Gentile mission that has so far prohibited them from understanding about the loaves.

#### SIGNS OF UNDERSTANDING

##### MARK 8:22A, ARRIVAL AT BETHSAIDA

Immediately following the question, οὐπω συνίετε; (8:21), Jesus and his disciples arrive at Bethsaida (8:22a), completing their intended crossing to the other side (8:13a). In the Sea Crossing movement, Bethsaida stands out in a variety of ways. First, it is one of just three (out of a total of twelve) geopolitical designations that occur more than once,<sup>9</sup> giving it the potential for intratextual allusions. Second, as discussed in Chapter Five, Bethsaida is the only geopolitical designation to appear in a sea crossing's departure statement, where it also serves as the second step of a two-step progression, also unique among departure statements (6:45). The author employs these rhetorical strategies to draw attention to Bethsaida so that when the disciples arrive instead at Gennesaret (6:53), the reader will notice the discrepancy. Then later, after another episodic sea crossing with thematic ties to ESC<sup>2</sup>, when the narrator states rather tersely, "and they came to Bethsaida" (8:22a),<sup>10</sup> the reader is expected to recall the failed ESC<sup>2</sup> and recognize the implications. If, as I have argued, the disciples' failure to reach Bethsaida initially denoted their resistance to Gentile mission, it follows that their eventual, successful arrival at Bethsaida marks their acceptance of Gentile

<sup>8</sup> Matera, "Incomprehension," 168n34.

<sup>9</sup> Data derived from Malbon, *Narrative Space*, 21.

<sup>10</sup> Of the five arrival statements, 8:22a is the shortest (see Figure 5–11).

mission,<sup>11</sup> especially given that the intervening episodes (i.e., the cycle of resistance) mostly concern matters related to Gentiles and Jesus' attempts to remove obstacles to Gentile mission.

#### MARK 8:22B–26, RESTORATION OF SIGHT

Jesus' healing of the blind man from Bethsaida provides further evidence that the disciples have acquiesced to Gentile mission. In 7:31–37, Jesus heals a deaf mute, and then in 8:22–26, a blind man. These two healings, which exhibit remarkable structural, verbal, and thematic parallels (see Chapter Three), are the only healings of organs of perception within the first half of the gospel. It is, therefore, more than coincidental that they essentially frame ESC<sup>3</sup>, the only episode in the gospel in which the disciples are explicitly accused of blindness and deafness (8:18), making it likely that these three episodes intersect and interact on the rhetorical plane of the narrative.

At first glance, these two healings appear to be just additional examples of minor characters functioning as foils for the defective disciples, in this case serving to highlight their deafness and blindness. Yet, there is a fundamental difference between these minor characters and others encountered within the Sea Crossing movement. For example, the faith of Jairus and of the hemorrhaging woman and the understanding of the Syrophoenician woman are qualities these characters possessed prior to their encounter with Jesus. Jesus does not grant them faith and understanding but grants their requests and desire for healing on the basis of their faith and understanding. In contrast, the deaf-mute and the blind man are not offered as models of spiritual virtue for they say and do nothing. Instead the focus in these episodes is on the ability of Jesus to heal such disabilities of perception, to unstop the ears of the deaf and open the eyes of the blind, as it says in Isaiah 35:5, which the crowd's response evokes in 7:37.<sup>12</sup> If the physical deafness and blindness of these minor characters serve to underscore the spiritual deafness and blindness of the disciples, then Jesus' ability to overcome these physical maladies would seem to point to his ability to

---

<sup>11</sup> Malbon regards ESC<sup>2</sup> not so much as a failed sea crossing as a detoured one that is finally completed in ESC<sup>3</sup> ("Jesus," 368, 372–73; so also, Wefald, "Separate Gentile Mission," 10–11). Smith regards the two interrelated voyages to Bethsaida, one aborted and one successful, as an instance of Mark's supposed plot suspension technique ("Bethsaida via Gennesaret," 372–74).

<sup>12</sup> Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 241; Iverson, *Gentiles*, 65, 103; Moloney, *Mark*, 151–52.

overcome the disciples' spiritual maladies.<sup>13</sup> More particularly, given that the deaf mute and the blind man are both Gentiles, their healing might produce the expectation that Jesus can and will overcome his disciples' resistance to Gentile mission.

Of course, to argue that these healings symbolize Jesus' ability to overcome his disciples' hardness of heart and create the expectation that he will do so is not the same as arguing that Jesus' healing of the blind man signifies that this has indeed occurred. After all, subsequent to Jesus' healing of the deaf mute, the disciples still manifest resistance to Gentile mission on at least two occasions (8:4, 14). Nevertheless, that the healing of the blind man serves in the capacity suggested is supported by two features unique to this healing: its having occurred in Bethsaida and its having occurred in two stages. It is not accidental that the Markan Jesus' unprecedented *two-touch* healing should occur in connection with Bethsaida, the rhetorically-laden geopolitical space the Markan disciples took *two* sea crossings to reach. According to Malbon, the two-stage healing of the blind Bethsaidian not only anticipates Peter's upcoming recognition scene, as commentators generally hold, it also provides commentary on what has already transpired.

Narratively, it would appear that Jesus works in two stages to enable the disciples to "see," to perceive the scope of his ministry, to understand that there is bread for the people on the east as well as on the west of the sea, for Gentiles as well as for Jews. In the detour from the journey commanded by Jesus, the disciples display their blurred vision.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, in the story-as-discoursed, Jesus' healing of the Bethsaidian conveys to the reader that Jesus has finally broken through the disciples' self-inflicted blindness and deafness occasioned by their hardened resistance to Gentile mission.

#### MARK 8:27–30, RECOGNITION OF JESUS' MESSIANIC IDENTITY

Yet, even if the disciples' arrival at Bethsaida and the healing of the blind man are sufficiently subtle and ambiguous to leave readers—real readers, that is—with some questions as to where the disciples stand with regard to Gentile mission, then the movement's climactic, concluding scene should put to rest any lingering uncertainties, for Peter's recognition of Jesus' messianic identity in 8:29 demonstrates conclusively that the disciples have finally embraced Jesus' Gentile mission and their participation

---

<sup>13</sup> Williams, *Other Followers*, 123, 129.

<sup>14</sup> Malbon, "Jesus," 372–73.

in it. But, how can the reader draw conclusions about the disciples' position on Gentile mission from Peter's recognition of who Jesus is? To answer this question and to understand the nature of the claim being made, we must retrace some of our steps and reconstruct the narrative logic that is operative within the Sea Crossing movement and that underlies the incomprehension of the Markan disciples.

In doing this, the foundation will also be laid for resolving another Markan conundrum, the narrative gap from 8:21 to 8:29. That is, Peter's sudden recognition of Jesus' identity in 8:29 is quite unexpected given the disciples' track record up to this point in the narrative. How, says Matera, "does Peter recognize that Jesus is the Messiah when he and the other disciples have consistently misunderstood him? What is the nature of the disciples' incomprehension . . . ?"<sup>15</sup> In other words, how does the narrative get from Jesus', οὐπω συνίετε; (8:21), to Peter's, σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστός (8:29), in the space of just a few verses?<sup>16</sup> As we shall see, the narrative logic of the Markan disciples' incomprehension provides what is necessary to bridge this narrative gap.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Matera, "Incomprehension," 154.

<sup>16</sup> In this regard, Peter's recognition of Jesus' messianic identity in 8:29 is quite similar to the centurion's recognition of Jesus' divine identity in 15:39, for neither recognition seems to flow logically from what has transpired in the narrative. It makes little sense that the Gentile centurion overseeing Jesus' execution should see *the way in which he died* (οὕτως ἐξέπνευσεν, 15:39) and on that basis conclude that this crucified Jew was indeed the Son of God. Of course, in keeping with the Markan narrative's dramatic irony, this scene has been constructed so as not to make sense, at least not in terms of normal human logic (cf. 8:33b). On three separate occasions prior to the centurion's climactic recognition, three different groups of characters make reference to Jesus' coming down from the cross (15:30, 32, 36), including the chief priests' mockery, "Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now so that we might see and believe" (ἴδωμεν, 15:32a). Consequently, when the centurion comes to recognize Jesus' divine status, not by having seen him come down from the cross but, precisely by having *seen* (ἰδὼν, 15:39) him suffer and die on the cross, the reader is expected to understand the centurion's recognition according to the narrative logic that has been established previously, which in this case concerned the necessity of Jesus' suffering and death. For Mark, the crucifixion is the ultimate revelation of Jesus' messianic identity for Jesus' suffering and death is central to Jesus' vocation as the Son of God. Consequently, we must understand Peter's recognition in accordance with the narrative logic that has been established previously in the narrative, which, as we shall see, on this occasion concerns the relationship between Gentile mission and the disciples' apprehension of Jesus' messianic identity.

<sup>17</sup> Of course, this is predicated on the reading that Peter's identification of Jesus as the Messiah accords with the narrative's ideological point of view regarding who Jesus is, which is the view taken here and to be argued below. For Horsley, no narrative gap exists between 8:21 and 8:29 because Peter's confession is another example of the disciples' failure. For a discussion on narrative gaps and the reading process, including criteria for filling in gaps in a narratively-responsible way, see Sternberg, *Poetics*, 186–263, esp. 186–90.

### *Jesus' Identity within the Sea Crossing Movement*

With all the attention the disciples' resistance to Gentile mission has received in this study, the reader must not lose sight of the fact that this is not the only focus of the Sea Crossing movement. In ESC<sup>1</sup>, Jesus calms the wind and sea with a word, prompting his fearful disciples to inquire: "*Who* then is this . . . ?" (4:41). This question, the answer to which the reader already knows (1:1) but the disciples are at pains to discern, expresses the movement's chief concern, the identity of Jesus, or more precisely, *the disciples' apprehension of Jesus' identity*. This latter refinement is offered not simply because the disciples are those who ask the question in 4:41 but because it is the disciples' recognition of Jesus' messianic identity, articulated by their spokesperson Peter, that eventually draws the movement to its climactic close, opening the way for a new set of narrative developments. Over the course of the Sea Crossing movement, the issue of Jesus' identity remains unresolved until the final scene.

For example, in what may constitute a minor recognition scene, the Gerasene demoniac, as if in direct response to the disciples' question in 4:41, addresses Jesus as "the Son of the Most High God" (5:7). Moreover, when instructed to tell people what *the Lord [God]* had done for him, the ex-demoniac proclaims what *Jesus* had done for him. This impressive exorcism along with the subsequent healing of the hemorrhaging woman and the raising of Jairus' daughter gives rise to more questions, the ultimate concern of which is who Jesus really is. "From where did this man get these things? What wisdom has been given to him, and what sort of mighty deeds are being performed by his hands! Is not this the carpenter . . . ?" (6:2–3).

As Jesus' name becomes known and news of his exploits spreads, more and more people begin discussing who he could be. Is he John the Baptist *redivivus*? Is he Elijah, or a prophet like one of the prophets (6:14–15)? Again, almost in direct response to these questions, the narrative offers evidence of Jesus' true identity. In the Jewish feeding, he is portrayed as Israel's shepherd, painted in both Mosaic and Davidic hues (6:33–44). In his walking upon the sea, he is presented as doing what only YHWH can do. Yet, his attempt at passing by his disciples in an act of epiphanic disclosure fails (6:48b–49), and once again, the reader understands what the disciples do not.

In 7:15, Jesus exercises unparalleled authority as he makes obsolete foundational Mosaic legislation by rendering all foods clean (7:19). In the very next episode,

this level of authority is recognized by the Syrophoenician woman in her unique address of Jesus as *Lord* (7:28). In the remainder of the movement, clues to Jesus' identity are provided by his feeding of a large crowd and by his exceptional healings of a deaf-mute and blind man with their messianic allusions to Isaiah 35:5–6.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, the movement concludes with Jesus himself broaching the question of his identity, “Who do people say I am?” (8:27). After the disciples rehearse the popular speculations introduced earlier (6:14–15), Jesus then asks them their opinion, “But who do *you* say I am?” (ὁμεῖς, 8:29a). Here, in anticipation of Peter's climactic announcement, Jesus' questions serve to recapitulate the questions and speculations regarding his identity that have circulated throughout the movement. In the end, the movement comes full circle as it concludes with an interesting reversal: the disciples' question about Jesus, “Who is this?” (4:41a) has become Jesus' question to the disciples, “Who am I?” (8:29a). This reversal substantiates the claim that the Sea Crossing movement's chief concern is not merely Jesus' identity but, more particularly, the disciples' apprehension of his identity. This is corroborated by the emphatic use of ὁμεῖς in 8:29a, which has also been fronted (cf. 8:27b; Figure 7–1).

<b>8:27b</b>	τίνα με λέγουσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι εἶναι;
<b>8:29a</b>	ὁμεῖς δὲ τίνα με λέγετε εἶναι;

**Figure 7–1: Horizontal-Line Synopsis of Jesus' Questions in Mark 8:27b, 29a**

Thus, in a variety of ways, by means of mighty deeds, rhetorical questions, discussions, and recognition scenes (both major and minor), the issue of Jesus' identity is kept in the foreground throughout the Sea Crossing movement.

#### *Jesus' Identity and Gentiles within the Sea Crossing Movement*

What then is the relationship between the movement's interests in Jesus' identity and Gentile mission? Svartvik offers the following observations.

In our discussion of spatial setting, we established that Mark clearly wishes to engender a Jew-Gentile pattern in Mk 4–8. At the same time, however, he pursues the quest of the protagonist. We ought not to ascribe this duality to sheer coincidence, but rather draw conclusions from it. Mark obviously intertwines the two motifs in a way which makes impossible a separation of the two. Having established an oscillation between the protagonist and the other characters, we can also dis-

<sup>18</sup> See fn 12.

cern an oscillating relationship between Gentile mission and Christology. . . . Mark has taken pains to weave a tapestry in which the Gentile motif and Christology are so interwoven that they cannot be separated from each other without tearing the narrative to pieces. Thus, the student of the NT who is interested in reading Mk as a narrative need not separate one motif from the other, but simply establish that Mark obviously sees these two motifs—outreach to Gentiles and Christology—as belonging together, depending on, and shaping, one another. In a sentence, *to Mark, the protagonist is never more his true self than in relation to the Gentiles.*<sup>19</sup>

Given the movement's clear interest in the disciples, in relation both to who Jesus is and to the matter of Gentile mission, we can take Svartvik's observations one step further and say that *the disciples' apprehension (or lack thereof) of Jesus' identity is inextricably intertwined with their stance on Gentile mission.* This gets at the heart of the disciples' incomprehension within the Sea Crossing movement, the narrative logic of which is set out most explicitly in 6:52.

#### *The Narrative Logic of the Disciples' Incomprehension*

In ESC<sup>2</sup>, why is it that Jesus' disciples are unable to recognize him when he comes to them walking upon the sea, especially when his intention to pass by them is an attempt to reveal himself via a formulaic act of divine self-disclosure? According to the narrator, the disciples' failure to recognize Jesus stems from their "not understanding about the loaves because their hearts were hardened" (6:52). This explicit, albeit enigmatic, explanation suggests that

the root cause of the disciples' incomprehension is hardness of heart . . . . The disciples did not understand the significance of the loaves because their hearts were hardened. And because they did not understand the significance of the loaves, they did not recognize Jesus as he manifested himself to them on the sea.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, the disciples' incomprehension within the Sea Crossing movement is to be attributed to their not understanding about the loaves, a byproduct of their hardened hearts.

This is the narrative logic of the disciples' incomprehension in general terms. Given the arguments of the previous two chapters, the reader is expected to understand the nature of the disciples' incomprehension more specifically as follows. The

---

<sup>19</sup> Svartvik, *Mark and Mission*, 263–64.

<sup>20</sup> Matera, "Incomprehension," 157.



disciples have not understood that the abundance of loaves produced during the Jewish meal designates a surplus intended for others. The disciples' resistance to Gentile mission (i.e., their hardness of heart) has adversely affected their ability to discern God's intentions (i.e., understanding about the loaves). The disciples cannot see that the leftover loaves point to a God-ordained Gentile mission, and so they are unable to recognize the identity of the one God has ordained to feed Gentiles as well as Jews, the one God has anointed to inaugurate an ethnically-diverse mission and to enlist and equip others to take part in it. In a word, the disciples' resistance to Gentile mission has rendered them incapable of recognizing who Jesus really is.

In one sense, this narrative logic is the opposite of what one might expect, which helps explain why the narrator introduces it via an explanatory γάρ-clause. After all, would it not have made more sense to construct a narrative logic wherein understanding Jesus' mission was dependent upon understanding who he was, not vice-versa? For example, had the disciples, like the reader, known from the beginning that Jesus was the Messiah, the anointed Son of God, would they not have been more likely to have accepted and participated in a mission that included Gentiles within its purview? Perhaps, but this is not the narrative logic at work in Mark. In Mark, especially in Part I, a character's recognition (or non-recognition) of who Jesus is directly depends upon their acceptance (or non-acceptance) of his messianic vocation.

Note, it is not until Peter recognizes him as the Messiah that Jesus begins to speak *plainly* (παρρησία, 8:31) of his vocation and identity. Prior to 8:29, Jesus speaks and acts in parables. Though the narrative is focused upon its protagonist, Jesus does not proclaim himself but the kingdom of God (1:14–15). Jesus exorcises unclean spirits but does not allow them to reveal who he is (1:34; 3:12). Jesus' mighty deeds point to the truth of his identity much as the parables point to the truth and reality of God's kingdom;<sup>21</sup> yet both are ambiguous for they serve two contrary functions simultaneously, to reveal and to conceal. Jesus' words and deeds, be they ordinary or mighty, are revelatory for those who are sympathetic to his mission and aims. Yet, for those fundamentally at odds with Jesus' mission, his words and deeds reveal nothing

---

<sup>21</sup> On the parabolic nature of Jesus' actions in Mark, especially the miracles, see discussions in Bassler, "Parable of the Loaves," 157–59; Boucher, *Mysterious Parable*, 64–85; Marshall, *Faith*, 60–61; "The fact that [an] incident presents itself as narrative rather than parable does not mean it cannot carry parabolic cargo; Mark . . . has narrative pieces that are markedly parabolic" (Ian MacKay, *John's Relationship With Mark: An Analysis of John 6 in the Light of Mark 6–8* (WUNT 2/182; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 195).

of who he is. These are the outsiders for whom everything, words *and* deeds, happens in parables (4:11)<sup>22</sup> and who therefore experience the judicial blindness of Isaiah 6:9–10 (4:12). “The miracles, like the parables, are revelations given obliquely. Those who will not see and hear identify themselves by their very obstinacy as ‘those outside’ to whom ‘the secret of the kingdom,’ or signs, will not be given.”<sup>23</sup> Outsiders are those whose blindness, deafness, and incomprehension are symptomatic of their hardness of heart.

In Movement 1, why do Jesus’ opponents fail to recognize the authority of the Holy Spirit in his exorcisms, attributing the exorcisms instead to the power of Satan (3:22)? In a word, they are fundamentally opposed to Jesus’ program for Israel’s renewal in its various manifestations: in Jesus’ pronouncement of forgiveness of sins (2:7), in his table fellowship with toll-collectors and sinners (2:16), in his disciples’ habit of not fasting (2:18), in his allowing them to pluck grain on the sabbath (2:24), and in his healing on the sabbath (3:2, 5). Their resistance and opposition to these outworkings of Jesus’ vocation constitute their hardness of heart (3:5b), blinding them to Jesus’ true identity and even leading them to plot his death (3:6).

Reflected in these controversies is the Markan Jesus’ penchant for transgressing “social and religious boundaries internal to Israel”<sup>24</sup> in an attempt to offer salvation “to those not officially recognized as belonging to Israel.”<sup>25</sup> In this regard, the Markan disciples are to be distinguished from Jesus’ religious opponents, for they show no signs of resistance to his disregard for these intra-Jewish boundaries. In fact, the narrative offers evidence of their having embraced this dimension of Jesus’ vocation. The disciples do not fast (2:18); they pluck grain on the sabbath (2:23); they eat with unwashed hands (7:2), and they dine with Jesus’ other followers, many of whom are toll-collectors and sinners (2:15–16). The success of their apostolic Galilean mission also points to their willingness to cross traditional religious boundaries that distinguish and separate one part of Israelite society from another; for this mission was a part of Jesus’ mission to Israel that reflected the same vision, values, and practices as

---

<sup>22</sup> “The phrase ‘everything happens in parables’ (rather than ‘is spoken in parables’) suggests that it is not only Jesus’ teaching that is in view but his whole ministry” (R. T. France, *Divine Government: God’s Kingship in the Gospel of Mark* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2003), 39).

<sup>23</sup> Boucher, *Mysterious Parable*, 76.

<sup>24</sup> Iverson, *Gentiles*, 79; cf. Juel, *Master of Surprise*, 39–41, 66–67.

<sup>25</sup> Gibson, “Rebuke,” 32.

Jesus' own mission (6:7–13) and that was, in all likelihood, directed at the same sorts of people as Jesus' own mission.

Yet, when it comes to crossing religious, social, and cultural barriers separating Israelite society from the rest of the world, the boundaries distinguishing Jews from Gentiles, the disciples draw the line and begin to manifest all manner of resistance. In this regard, the Markan disciples are more akin to Jesus' religious opponents for they too are opposed to Jesus' offering of salvation "to those not officially recognized as belonging to Israel."<sup>26</sup> This explains why the disciples, though insiders, come to be characterized as blind and deaf (8:18), the same language used for outsiders (4:12), and as hard of heart (6:52; 8:17), the same language used for the scribes and Pharisees (3:5; 10:5; cf. 2:6, 8; 7:6, 21). Furthermore, this helps explain why the disciples, like Jesus' religious opponents, are unable to recognize who he really is.

Jesus' transgression of officially-recognized boundaries belongs to his program of extending the blessings of God's kingdom to those in need. To rescue the lost and reconcile them to God, Jesus pronounces the paralytic forgiven (2:1–12) and dines with toll-collectors and sinners (2:13–17). To provide for his hungry disciples (2:23–28) and to restore a man's crippled limb (3:1–6), Jesus breaks the sabbath. Had the scribes and Pharisees not been opposed to Jesus' program for the renewal of Israel, they would have understood about the exorcisms. They would have understood that Jesus' exorcisms were a sign that Satan's kingdom had come to an end and God's kingdom was being established. They would have understood that the authority animating Jesus' words and deeds came from God and so would have recognized him, in the words of the Baptist, as the stronger one who would cleanse them with the Holy Spirit (1:8). Instead, they cling to old wineskins (2:22), opposing his *modus operandi*,<sup>27</sup> thereby rendering themselves incapable of recognizing him as God's anointed agent, mistaking him for an agent of Satan possessed by an unclean spirit (3:30).

Thus, in M1, the incomprehension of Jesus' opponents is explained according to the same basic narrative logic underlying the disciples' incomprehension in M2. In both cases, a group's failure to recognize something of who Jesus is ultimately stems from their hardened resistance to a central facet of his messianic vocation. The logic is the same; only the details differ. In M1, where the dominant question concerns Je-

---

<sup>26</sup> Gibson, "Rebuke," 32.

<sup>27</sup> "If traditionalists cannot accommodate such behavior within accepted forms, then new forms will have to be created: fresh wineskins for new wine, as Jesus says (Juel, *Master of Surprise*, 67).

Jesus' *authority* (1:27), the opponents' hardness of heart inhibits them from understanding the significance of the exorcisms and therefore from recognizing the divine origin of Jesus' authority, instead attributing it to Satan (3:30). Similarly, in M2, where the dominant question concerns Jesus' *identity* (4:41), the disciples' resistance to Gentile mission inhibits them from understanding the significance of the loaves and therefore from recognizing Jesus during his theophanic sea walk, taking him for a ghost instead (6:49). Thus, while the narrative logic of incomprehension is most clearly articulated in 6:52, it can be shown to operate more widely within the Markan narrative.

The exorcisms and the loaves are parabolic in that they symbolize some essential aspect of Jesus' messianic vocation and have the ability to reveal or conceal Jesus' identity, depending upon one's acceptance or rejection of Jesus' vocational aims and praxis. Openness to the words and deeds of Jesus produces understanding, which in turn yields a measure of insight into his true nature and identity. The disciples' resistance to Gentile mission leads to their not understanding about the loaves and ultimately to their failure to recognize who Jesus really is. In contrast, the Syro-phenician woman's acceptance of the secondary status of Gentiles relative to that of Jews within Jesus' program is accompanied by her understanding about the loaves and her recognition of Jesus as Lord. Thus, the narrative logic that explains the disciples' non-understanding and non-recognition of Jesus in 6:49 also explains the Syro-phenician woman's understanding and recognition of Jesus in 7:28. This narrative logic should, therefore, be able to explain Peter's recognition of Jesus in 8:29.

### *The Narrative Logic of the Disciples' Comprehension*

#### Peter's Declaration as Non-Recognition

The prevailing view among commentators is that, from the point of view of Mark's narrative, Peter's declaration in 8:29 is essentially correct; Jesus is indeed the Messiah. The problem, though, is that neither Peter nor the disciples fully understand what this entails for Jesus or for them, as the ensuing narrative reveals. There are, however, commentators who regard Peter's declaration to be wholly inaccurate.<sup>28</sup> Horsley represents this view when he suggests that the subsequent narrative seeks

---

<sup>28</sup> A. Meyer, "Die Entstehung des Markusevangeliums," in *Festgabe für Adolf Jülicher* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1927), 35–60; Horsley, *Hearing*, 92–93. Included here are those who see Peter's confession as representing a defective christology that Mark attempts to correct, e.g., Perrin, "Christology," 173–87; Schreiber, "Christologie," 154–83; Weeden, *Traditions*, 64–69.

“not just to qualify but to correct or even to reject Peter’s ‘confession,’”<sup>29</sup> (and it is clear from other comments that Horsley sees Mark as completely rejecting, not simply correcting, Peter’s so-called confession). This, Horsley argues, is reflected in “the stern language” Jesus uses “in immediate reply to Peter, the same language he uses in sharply ‘rebuking’ the demons (1:25; 3:12; 9:25). Jesus immediately ‘rebuked’ Peter, and sternly forbade Peter to speak to anyone concerning him” because Peter’s identification “is a false understanding of Jesus, based upon wrong assumptions or expectations.”<sup>30</sup> Moreover, following Jesus’ first announcement of his upcoming passion and resurrection, Peter rebukes Jesus, and Jesus fires back rebuking Peter and addressing him as Satan (8:32–33).

This is no little difference of opinion. After Jesus rebukes Peter for believing he is the “messiah,” Peter rebukes Jesus for saying he has to die, which lead [sic] Jesus to rebuke Peter as “Satan,” the demonic force with which God and his own program are engaged in struggle.<sup>31</sup>

According to Horsley, the narrative “portrays Peter not only as utterly misunderstanding . . . but as a demonic opponent of God’s kingdom and Jesus’ agenda of renewal of Israel plus. Mark 8:27–33 is thus Peter’s *confrontation* with Jesus more than Peter’s ‘confession.’”<sup>32</sup>

#### Peter’s Declaration as Recognition

If Horsley’s reading were correct, then it could offer another example of the disciples’ opposition to Gentile mission. Peter’s identification of Jesus as the Messiah could be viewed as an attempt to localize or restrict Jesus to a particular nationalistic program. Unfortunately, from a narrative standpoint, Horsley’s argument, and others like it, fails on many fronts. To begin, Jesus’ command to secrecy is treated as evidence that Jesus completely rejects Peter’s messianic identification (8:30), based largely upon the use of ἐπιτιμάω, but this is problematic for two reasons. First, it fails to distinguish between the different uses of ἐπιτιμάω, treating it as though it exhibited the same grammatical and argument structures in 8:30 as it does in 8:32 and 8:33, which it does not. In 8:32 and 8:33, ἐπιτιμάω<sup>2</sup> is a two-place predicator with Agent and Experiencer arguments, and in 8:30, ἐπιτιμάω<sup>3</sup> is a three-place predicator with

---

<sup>29</sup> Horsley, *Hearing*, 92.

<sup>30</sup> Horsley, *Hearing*, 92.

<sup>31</sup> Horsley, *Hearing*, 92.

<sup>32</sup> Horsley, *Hearing*, 93.

Agent, Experiencer, and Content arguments (Figure 7–2); thus they evoke different semantic (and narrative) frames and so function differently and possess different meanings in their respective contexts.

ἐπιτιμάω <sup>2</sup>		ἐπιτιμάω <sup>3</sup>		
1	2	1	2	[3]
Agt	Exp	Agt	Exp	[Con]

Figure 7–2: ἐπιτιμάω<sup>2</sup> and ἐπιτιμάω<sup>3</sup>

In 8:32 and 8:33, Peter and Jesus *rebuke* one another (ἐπιτιμάω<sup>2</sup>), but in 8:30, Jesus *orders* his disciples not to speak to anyone about him (ἐπιτιμάω<sup>3</sup>). The Content of the command is lexically realized through a ἵνα-clause of indirect discourse (ἵνα μηδενὶ λέγωσιν περὶ αὐτοῦ, 8:30) and is what distinguishes 8:30 from 8:32, 33 (Figure 7–3).

<b>8:30</b>	καὶ	ἐπετίμησεν αὐτοῖς ἵνα μηδενὶ λέγωσιν περὶ αὐτοῦ.
<b>8:32</b>	ὁ Πέτρος . . . ἤρξατο	ἐπετίμῃν αὐτῷ.
<b>8:33</b>	ὁ . . .	ἐπετίμησεν Πέτρῳ

Figure 7–3: Horizontal-Line Synopsis of 8:30, 32, and 33

This same use of ἐπιτιμάω<sup>3</sup> is found in 3:12 where Jesus *sternly commands* unclean spirits not to make him known (Figure 7–4). Clearly, ἐπιτιμάω<sup>3</sup> is a strong word, but in 8:30, it is a strong word about what not to do with Peter’s revelation not a rebuke of the revelation itself.

<b>3:12</b>	καὶ πολλὰ ἐπετίμα αὐτοῖς ἵνα μὴ αὐτὸν φανερὸν ποιήσωσιν.
<b>8:30</b>	καὶ ἐπετίμησεν αὐτοῖς ἵνα μηδενὶ λέγωσιν περὶ αὐτοῦ.

Figure 7–4: ἐπιτιμάω + ἵνα μὴ in Mark 3:12 and 8:30

A second problem is Horsley’s erroneous logic that the use of ἐπιτιμάω in 8:30 indicates the falsity of Peter’s identification because ἐπιτιμάω is used elsewhere in reference to Jesus’ rebuking of *demons*, citing 1:25; 3:12; and 9:25 in support. Here again, Horsley has failed to distinguish between ἐπιτιμάω<sup>2</sup> (1:25; 9:25) and ἐπιτιμάω<sup>3</sup> (3:12), but more importantly, his appeal to Jesus’ silencing of the demons offers better support for the view he wishes to dismantle than the one he seeks to establish. In Mark, while unclean spirits are demonic forces allied against God’s kingdom, they remain spiritual beings with insight into spiritual matters. Their declarations of who

Jesus is (1:24; 3:11; 5:7) are a form of reliable commentary that, in this case, correspond to the declarations of other reliable commentators: the narrator (1:1), God (1:11) and Jesus himself (14:62; cf. 13:32). In 1:34, the narrator notes that Jesus did not allow the demons to speak precisely because they *knew* him. Ἐπιτιμῶ<sup>33</sup> evokes narrative frames wherein those who recognize Jesus' true identity are *ordered* to keep quiet (3:12; 10:48). Jesus' silencing of the demons, thus, offers one more reason for regarding Peter's messianic recognition as accurate.<sup>33</sup>

Perhaps, the most problematic aspect of Horsley's claim is that the Markan reader is given every indication that ὁ χριστός is an accurate and entirely appropriate appellation for Jesus. After all, the narrative is introduced as "the beginning of the good news of Jesus the *Messiah*" (1:1). Later, Jesus tells his disciples that those will have a reward who offer them a drink in his name on account of their being of the *Messiah* (9:41). At the crucifixion, the chief priests mockingly refer to Jesus as *the Messiah*, which the reader recognizes as the height of irony, the enemies of Jesus unwittingly declaring his true identity (15:32). Finally, Jesus himself accepts the designation, from an opponent no less. When asked by the high priest if he is *the Messiah*, he responds unambiguously, "I am" (14:61–62). So, "while the disciples' understanding of the title may be incomplete, it is hard to see how the disciples' attribution of the title to Jesus could be anything other than an advance in understanding within Mark's narrative world."<sup>34</sup>

Another problem with Horsley's reading is it disregards the "narrative 'stop' and 'start' in vss. 30 and 31 respectively."<sup>35</sup> Mark 8:31–33 represents the launch of a new thematic development. The scene begins with καὶ ἤρξατο διδάσκειν (8:31a), an expression used to introduce new movements (4:1, 2) or episodes (6:2, 34). In addition, a new subject of instruction is introduced, the necessity of Jesus' suffering and death (8:31), along with a new manner of instruction, "and he spoke the word *plainly*" (παρησίᾳ, 8:32a).<sup>36</sup> Horsley, however, treats 8:31–33 as though it were a simple continuation of 8:27–30, as though Jesus' rebuke of Peter in 8:33 is indistin-

<sup>33</sup> Boring, *Mark*, 239.

<sup>34</sup> Shiner, *Follow Me!*, 228–229n63.

<sup>35</sup> Hawkin ("Incomprehension," 499) offers this in critique of Meyer ("Entstehung," 35–60).

<sup>36</sup> This stands in direct contrast to the inception of the Sea Crossing movement, "and [Jesus] began to teach them in parables" (4:2).

guishable from his earlier “rebuke” of Peter in 8:30. While 8:27–30 and 8:31–33 are closely related,<sup>37</sup> they relate to one another

not as a thematic *merger* but as a thematic *progression*. On this view it is to be assumed that the Marcan Jesus accepts the confession of Peter—indeed, that it is precisely this confession that clears the way for a new phase of the gospel story; the esoteric teaching of Jesus about his coming fate. The unveiling of the secret of Jesus’ identity introduces the unveiling of the mystery of his destiny. The paradoxical messianic destiny of Jesus cannot be revealed until he is professed as messiah. The messianic destiny is an esoteric revelation which hinges on the confession.<sup>38</sup>

Horsley may question the view that 8:27–30 and 8:31–33 combine to present Peter’s recognition of Jesus’ messianic identity as genuine insight, albeit imperfect, but this is precisely the interpretation the narrative has been preparing the reader to make. The reader has known since the prologue that Jesus is the Messiah (1:1) and, since then, has been privy to the disclosure of Jesus’ identity via declarations of God (1:11) and the unclean spirits (1:24; 3:11; 5:7). In M1, the dramatic tension mounts as Jesus’ opponents fail to recognize the divine origins of Jesus’ power and authority. In M2, the tension mounts even higher as Jesus’ own disciples are increasingly incapable of discerning the truth of Jesus’ identity. By the time the narrative reaches its midway point, the dramatic tension is almost at its breaking point. The question Jesus asks the disciples at the conclusion of the final sea crossing is the same question the reader is asking of them, “Do you still not understand?” (8:21). When Jesus asks the disciples what conclusions people have drawn regarding his identity, the reader is in a position to know that these popular views are not correct though they are headed in the right direction. Then, when Peter proclaims, “You are the Messiah!” (8:29), the reader experiences a sense of relief and thinks, “Finally!” In the pregnant pause between 8:30 and 8:31, the dramatic tension dissipates for the matter of Jesus’ identity has finally been resolved within the story world.

This respite is short-lived, however, for almost immediately Peter rebukes Jesus over the disclosure of his messianic fate, which prompts the reader to question their initial impression of Peter’s recognition. The reader already knows Jesus to be the Messiah and so recognizes Peter’s identification as accurate. Yet, Peter’s subse-

---

<sup>37</sup> Following Hawkin (“Incomprehension,” 498), I regard 8:27–33 as a single episode comprised of two scenes.

<sup>38</sup> Hawkin, “Incomprehension,” 500 (emphasis added).



quent rebuke of Jesus (8:32) and Jesus' counterrebuke of Peter (8:33) exposes a deficiency in his understanding of Jesus' vocational identity as the Messiah. Having arrived at the knowledge of Jesus' messianic status prior to and independent of Peter's recognition, the reader does not abandon Peter's insight. Instead, the reader maintains the accuracy of Peter's identification even while recognizing the deficiencies in Peter's own understanding of that identification. This narrative sequence, from Peter's recognition of Jesus to Peter's rebuke of Jesus, forms a two-step progression of sorts, and is immediately preceded by the two-stage healing of the blind man from Bethsaida, which anticipates and prepares the reader for Peter's ambiguous recognition of Jesus.

#### Peter's Recognition and the Blind Man from Bethsaida

Among commentators who view the two-stage restoration of sight symbolically, there are two basic approaches. Earlier commentators tended to view the man's partial recovery of sight as symbolizing the popular speculations about Jesus (8:28; cf. 6:14–16) while his full recovery of sight symbolized Peter's climactic recognition of Jesus as the Messiah.<sup>39</sup> Those who held this view often acknowledged that Peter's subsequent rebuke of Jesus made it "obvious . . . that even the confession that Jesus is the Messiah represents only partial sight."<sup>40</sup> This, however, did not alter their basic understanding of the rhetorical relationship between 8:22–26 and 8:27–30. Taking into account Peter's rebuke and the misunderstandings of the disciples that punctuate The Way movement, more recent commentators tend to view Peter's recognition as partial sight, associating it with the restored yet blurred vision of the blind man following Jesus' first touch.<sup>41</sup> The man's fully-restored vision is thought to represent a time in the post-narrative future when the disciples will presumably arrive at a full understanding of who Jesus is.<sup>42</sup>

One could debate which symbolic interpretation is to be preferred. Does Peter's recognition represent full sight (the older view) or partial sight (the newer

---

<sup>39</sup> This view seems to have first been articulated by Robert Henry Lightfoot who saw parallel formal structures in 8:22–26 and 8:27–30 (*History and Interpretation in the Gospels* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1935), 90–91). So also, Lane, *Mark*, 286–87; Alan Richardson, *The Miracle-Stories of the Gospels* (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1941), 86.

<sup>40</sup> Lane, *Mark*, 287n54.

<sup>41</sup> E.g., Guelich, *Mark*, 433–36; Hooker, *Saint Mark*, 198; Earl S. Johnson, "Mark VIII.22–26: The Blind Man from Bethsaida," *NTS* 25 (1979): 381–83; Moloney, *Mark*, 166; Smith, "Bethsaida via Genesaret," 370–71.

<sup>42</sup> E.g., Guelich, *Mark*, xxxvii, 436; Smith, *Lion*, 42; 120; Watts, *New Exodus*, 131.

view)? For the purposes of this thesis, it makes little difference; for both views present Peter's recognition as genuine insight. Even when people appeared to the man as trees walking about (8:24), he could still be said to see. Similarly, even if Peter's recognition of Jesus is partial, it remains genuine recognition nonetheless; it is not, as Horsley would suggest, simply another example of the disciples' persistent blindness.

In the end, I think a combination of the two views (the older and the newer) offers the best explanation of the rhetorical relationship between the blind man's recovery of sight and Peter's recognition of Jesus, for together they match the reader's experience of the chronological unfolding of the plot, as described above, whereby Peter's recognition appears initially as full sight and then later as partial sight. In this view, the latter assessment (partial sight) does not so much override or correct the former assessment (full sight) as it complements it. In narrative perspective, Peter's recognition is both full and partial, not just one or the other. This assertion may seem nonsensical for, given the narrative sequence of events—recognition followed by rebuke—it would seem more natural to conclude that Peter's recognition is partial at best. This approach, however, neglects the dynamic nature of the implied reader's experience of the story—a property of the narrative—by abandoning the narrative's diachronic (temporal) dimension in favor of its synchronic (atemporal) dimension. Heil touches on this problem when he offers a critique of the newer view, articulated on this occasion by Juel.<sup>43</sup>

Juel . . . views Peter's confession as true but "inappropriate" because he does not yet understand the need for Jesus to suffer and die. . . . But Juel is jumping ahead and interpreting Peter's confession from the viewpoint of the second half of the gospel. At the time that Peter confesses Jesus to be "the Christ" in 8:29, his confession is entirely "appropriate."<sup>44</sup>

Here in Mark's narrative, we encounter a phenomenon akin to Einstein's theory of special relativity wherein space and time are not absolute but relative in relation to an observer's position in space-time. Peter's recognition of Jesus cannot be said to represent full or partial recognition without factoring in the position the implied reader occupies at a given moment within the narrative. Viewing 8:27–30 from the vantage point of its being the climactic scene of the Sea Crossing movement with its particu-

---

<sup>43</sup> Donald H. Juel, *Messiah and Temple: The Trial of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark* (SBLDS 31; Missoula, Mo.: Scholars Press, 1977), 90.

<sup>44</sup> Heil, *Walking*, 142–143n122.

lar interests, themes and motifs—not to mention its being the climactic scene of the whole first half of the gospel—the reader is expected to regard Peter’s recognition of Jesus as the Messiah as full sight.

This has implications for our understanding of the Markan disciples. If, according to Mark’s narrative logic, the disciples’ inability to recognize who Jesus is stems from their not having understood the meaning and significance of the leftover loaves due to their hardened resistance to Gentile mission, it follows from their recognition of Jesus’ messianic identity in 8:29 that they have finally abandoned their willful opposition to Gentile mission and so have come to understand about the loaves. Although we differ in our views regarding the nature of the disciples’ hardness of heart and thus what it means to understand about the loaves, Matera and I do agree regarding the narrative logic of the Markan disciples’ incomprehension *and* its application to Peter’s recognition.

At Caesarea Philippi the disciples, in the person of Peter, finally understand what Jesus has been talking about and recognize what would have been apparent to them in the miracle of the loaves, if their hearts were not hardened: Jesus is the Messiah. That the disciples now recognize that Jesus is the Messiah means that this hardness of heart, the source of [their] incomprehension . . . , has been lifted.<sup>45</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The disciples’ eventual arrival at Gentile Bethsaida on their second attempt and Jesus’ eventual restoration of the blind Bethsaidian’s sight on his second attempt are both signals to the reader that the disciples have finally, after many failures, come to understand about the loaves.<sup>46</sup> Peter’s recognition of Jesus’ messianic identity confirms this for, in accordance with the narrative’s own logic, the Markan disciples ability to comprehend who Jesus is depends upon their understanding about the leftover loaves, which is only possible in light of their acceptance of Jesus’ Gentile mission and their roles in it. This reading finds support in what follows in the narrative.

---

<sup>45</sup> Matera, “Incomprehension,” 169.

<sup>46</sup> “The two-stage nature of the healing at Bethsaida and the two-stage attempt of the disciples to arrive there are parallel narrative constructions which are intended to underpin Mark’s overriding theological purpose. In accepting the universalism of the gospel, represented by the successful crossing of the lake, the disciples have also gained some partial insight into Jesus’ true identity” (Smith, “Bethsaida via Gennesaret,” 374). While Smith and I are in essential agreement on this point, it is unclear whether Smith has successfully defended this insight.

Whatever failures the Markan disciples manifest throughout the remainder of the narrative, and these are numerous, the Gentile matter has been resolved. Not only are there no more hints of the disciples' resistance to Gentile mission, there is also evidence that points in the opposite direction. First, given the significant contributions the Sea Crossing and The Loaves motifs make to the theme of Gentile mission, the fact that, at this transitional point in the narrative, the Sea Crossing motif ceases altogether and The Loaves motif goes on sabbatical, making only one more appearance in the final movement, strongly suggests that the Gentile issue has been resolved. In fact, at this point, the narrative gives way to other motifs and concerns.

Second, Jesus' eschatological discourse takes for granted that the disciples will actively engage in Gentile mission in the future, and will even be persecuted for it! Not only will they be beaten in (Jewish) synagogues but they will stand before (Gentile) governors and kings. "The gospel must first be proclaimed to all the nations," and in carrying out that mission among and to Gentiles, these Jewish disciples of Jesus will be arrested and put on trial (13:9–11).

Finally, perhaps the most striking evidence of the disciples' change of heart regarding Gentile mission comes close after Peter's recognition scene. When Jesus and three of his disciples are on a mountain retreat, a Gentile man brings his demon-possessed son to Jesus. In his absence, the disciples who have remained behind attempt to cast an unclean spirit out of the boy (9:17–18). Though ultimately unsuccessful, the disciples have, nevertheless, surprisingly attempted to heal a Gentile.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, their failure is not attributed to hardness of heart but to lack of faith (9:19), and not just the disciples' lack of faith (9:23–24).<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> This insight is owed to Iverson, *Gentiles*, 120.

<sup>48</sup> Actually, one may question whether the disciples' faith is in view at all. The disciples have manifested a lack of faith before (e.g., 4:40), but elements within this episode may exonerate the disciples on this occasion. First, when the disciples approach Jesus privately and ask him about their inability to perform the exorcism—a scene reminiscent of those occasions where the disciples ask Jesus to explain a parable (4:10; 7:17)—it is significant that Jesus neither chastises nor rebukes them as he is wont to do but instead teaches them about the importance of prayer when dealing with this particular kind of spirit (9:29). Second, one must recall that Jesus himself previously experienced problems healing and exorcizing. In his hometown, Jesus was *unable* to perform any mighty work (οὐκ ἐδύνατο; 6:5) due to the people's lack of faith (6:6a), and here, the disciples were *unable* to exorcise the demon (οὐκ ἠδυνήθημεν; 9:28). Could it be that the disciples' faith was not the problem on this occasion? Is this why Jesus addresses the faith of the boy's father (9:23–24)? Perhaps, then, the disciples are not implicated in Jesus' exclamation, "O faithless generation!" (9:19). Perhaps ὁ γενεὰ ἄπιστος is directed at the crowd alone and plays a role similar to that of Jesus' *amazement* at his hometown's lack of faith (6:6a).

These elements are consistent with a reading of Peter's recognition as evidence of the disciples having changed their position on Gentile mission. Moreover, given the role that geopolitical space has played throughout the Sea Crossing movement, the fact that Peter's recognition takes place deep in Gentile territory (8:27) provides additional support for the idea that the disciples' recognition of Jesus' messianic identity is directly related to the issue of Gentile mission. Herein lies the irony of Peter's recognition: to know Jesus as *Israel's* Messiah is to know Jesus as the one who has the authority to offer Israel's salvific blessings to those who do not belong to Israel, be they the unclean within Israel's ranks (e.g., lepers, sinners, toll-collectors, etc.) or the unclean outwith Israel altogether, namely, *Gentiles*.<sup>49</sup>

Thus, the narrative logic of the disciples' incomprehension provides Mark's readers with a perspective that allows them to bridge 8:21 and 8:29, to explain what has gone on, behind the scenes as it were, between the last notice of the disciples' consistent and persistent *incomprehension* about the loaves (8:21) and their uncharacteristic and unexpected *comprehension* regarding Jesus' messianic identity (8:29). Of course, bridging gaps in a narrative is a tricky business. Much is required of the reader, and by their very nature, narrative gaps are ambiguous and so open to multiple interpretations. Nevertheless, I submit that this is the best explanation offered to date; it is where the narrative logic of the disciples' incomprehension naturally leads.

There remains, however, an unanswered question that may leave some dissatisfied with the proposed reading, namely, what was it that finally broke through the disciples' opposition to Gentile mission and brought about their change of heart? In the end, the Markan narrative may not provide an unambiguous answer to this question. Some commentators suggest that witnessing Jesus' two-touch healing of the blind man finally opened the disciples' eyes. But, how would one more healing, even this spectacular and unusual healing, be able to do what all the other mighty deeds of Jesus had thus far failed to do? Clearly, these commentators are sensing the connection in the narrative between the blind man and the disciples, but they have misunderstood its nature. The connection between these characters occurs at the discourse, not story, level of the narrative; in a word, the connection is rhetorical, not causal. The blind man's recovery of sight is paradigmatic of the disciples' own re-

---

<sup>49</sup> A similar irony is at work in relation to the centurion's recognition (15:39), to know Jesus as the divine Son of God is to know him as the suffering Son of Man.

covery of sight,<sup>50</sup> but it does not lead to it. To argue that the healing *caused* the disciples change of heart would be to treat the disciples as *readers* of the narrative, beneficiaries of the discourse between the implied author and reader, and not as *characters* within the story world.

If I were to speculate as to an event that may have triggered or at least contributed to the disciples' change of heart regarding Gentile mission, a good candidate would be Jesus' recollections of the two feedings with their foci on the leftover loaves (8:19–20). This possibility is suggested by the disciples' arrival at Bethsaida in 8:22, the first indication that they have come to understand about the loaves, which, according to Mark's narrative logic, is possible only after their hearts have changed. Perhaps, then, Jesus' recollections allowed the meaning and significance of the leftover loaves to break through their hardened resistance, which is, after all, what they were designed to do. Perhaps, in drawing their attention to the fact that baskets of leftover loaves were produced in *both* feedings, one Jewish and one Gentile, the reality began to dawn that God had authorized both Jewish and Gentile missions and that engaging in the latter would not adversely affect the former. Again, identifying the particular cause of the disciples' transformation may be more than the Markan narrative allows; nevertheless, the narrative logic of the disciples' incomprehension does make it possible to recognize that a transformation has occurred.

#### EXCURSUS — MATTHEW ON MARK'S SEA CROSSING MOVEMENT

In this study, we have on occasion considered how Matthew's redaction of Mark contributes to our reading of Mark. Employing Matthew in this way might appear inconsistent with a narrative approach to Mark, but it need not. The goal of a text-oriented, narrative-critical reading of a text is "to read the text as the implied reader,"<sup>51</sup> a task made more difficult for real readers of Mark who are temporally, geographically, and culturally distant from the imagined early readers of Mark who served as the basis for the author's construction of the implied reader. Since the implied reader is an entity encoded within the text and does not correspond to any actual reader or readers, reconstructions of the implied reader must be based solely and exclusively upon the Markan text as we have it. Nevertheless, the method for reconstructing the implied

---

<sup>50</sup> Matera, "Incomprehension," 171.

<sup>51</sup> Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 20.

reader may legitimately be facilitated and informed by information and insights derived from extratextual sources. Certainly, we would consider suspect a text-oriented reading of Mark that bore little or no relation to any actual readings by early readers of Mark for it would imply that the narrative critic has not read Mark as the implied reader. The author of Matthew is recognized to be an early reader of Mark, who even composed a narrative that is, in part, a byproduct of his engagement with Mark. A narrative critic must exercise caution when employing Matthew to illuminate Mark for Matthew's use of Mark is a complex issue; nevertheless, such a use of Matthew remains defensible, not to mention fruitful, from a narrative-critical standpoint.

It is no secret that the Matthean disciples are cast in a more favorable light than their Markan counterparts. This disparity in the characterization is most pronounced in the material constituting Mark's Sea Crossing movement. As noted previously, the Sea Crossing and The Loaves motifs are absent from Matthew, as the occurrences of *θάλασσα*, *πλοῖον*, and *ἄρτος* in Matthew fail to satisfy Freedman's criterion of avoidability. In addition, the most radical modifications Matthew makes to Mark's Sea Crossing movement concern matters related to the disciples' incomprehension, their hardness of heart and Gentile mission, in short, the very issues that comprise the narrative logic of the disciples' incomprehension in Mark. This raises an interesting question. Could it be that Matthew's redaction of Mark shows evidence that the author understood the negative characterization of the Markan disciples in the way this study has proposed, namely, that the source of their incomprehension and non-recognition of Jesus lies in their resistance to Gentile mission?

#### MATTHEW ON INCOMPREHENSION

Even if the Matthean disciples should be regarded, much as their Markan counterparts, as consistently misunderstanding Jesus, his ministry, and mission,<sup>52</sup> it remains the case that the disciples in Matthew exhibit a level of understanding far greater than that of the disciples in Mark, especially in the Sea Crossing movement. To begin, the Matthean disciples are portrayed as understanding Jesus' parables where the Markan disciples are not. Following the sower parable, the Markan disciples ask Jesus

---

<sup>52</sup> Despite their recognition of the Matthean disciples' failures, redaction critics on the whole tend to regard the Matthean disciples as understanding Jesus and his mission. This view has been challenged by narrative critics who see misunderstanding as a characteristic feature of the Matthean disciples (Jeannine K. Brown, *The Disciples in Narrative Perspective: The Portrayal and Function of the Matthean Disciples* (SBLAcBib 9; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 29).

about the parables, and he replies, “To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God” (4:10–11). The Matthean disciples ask a slightly different question, “Why do you speak to them in parables?” (13:10) and they receive a slightly different answer, “To you it has been given *to know* the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” (13:11). The Markan disciples have been given a riddle, the Matthean disciples have been granted knowledge. This implies a greater level of understanding on the part of the Matthean disciples, which finds support in the subsequent narrative. Prior to his explaining the sower parable, Jesus chastises the Markan disciples for lacking understanding, “Do you not know this parable? Then how will you know all the parables?” (4:13), whereas he blesses the Matthean disciples for their capacity to understand, “Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear” (13:16). At the conclusion of the parables discourse, the Matthean Jesus asks, “Have you understood all these things?” His disciples respond, “Yes” (13:51), and Jesus favorably likens them to scribes of the kingdom (13:52). Mark and Matthew’s initial sketches of the understanding, or lack thereof, of Jesus’ disciples foreshadow what follows in their respective narratives.

For example, at the conclusion of ESC<sup>2</sup>, the failed actions and responses of the Markan disciples are attributed to their not having understood about the loaves due to their hardened hearts (6:52). In Matthew, this negative assessment is replaced with a description of the disciples worshipping Jesus and proclaiming him to be the Son of God (14:33). The conclusion of ESC<sup>3</sup> also manifests a similar disparity in the portraiture of the disciples. In Mark, the episode concludes with Jesus’ exasperated question, “Do you still not understand?” (8:21). In Matthew, Jesus also questions the disciples’ failure to understand, “How did you not perceive that I was not speaking about bread?” (16:11); nevertheless, the episode ends with a statement noting that the disciples finally understood what Jesus had been talking about (16:12; cf. Matt 17:12–13 // Mark 9:13).

Certainly, Matthew retains some of Mark’s references to the incomprehension of the disciples (e.g., Matt 15:16–17 // Mark 7:18) but much more frequently Matthew purges references to the disciples’ incomprehension and also adds material that stresses their understanding. A similar strategy can be observed regarding the hardness of heart of the Markan disciples.



## MATTHEW ON HARDNESS OF HEART

The Matthean disciples are never described as having hardened hearts. They may at times lack faith and/or understanding, but they never manifest hardness of heart. Again, this distinction between the Matthean and Markan disciples shows up in the second and third ESCs. In ESC<sup>2</sup>, Matthew replaces Mark's reference to the disciples' hardness of heart (6:52) with a description of the disciples' worship and recognition of Jesus' divine identity (14:33). In ESC<sup>3</sup>, Jesus' harshest criticisms of the disciples have been eliminated altogether, namely, the related charges of hardness of heart, blindness, and deafness (Figure 7–5). One result is the loss of the rhetorical links between the disciples and Jesus' opponents.

Mark 8:17–18	Matthew 16:9
οὐπω νοεῖτε οὐδὲ συνίετε; πεπωρωμένην ἔχετε τὴν καρδίαν ὑμῶν; ὀφθαλμοὺς ἔχοντες οὐ βλέπετε καὶ ὠτα ἔχοντες οὐκ ἀκούετε; καὶ οὐ μνημονεύετε . . .	οὐπω νοεῖτε,      οὐδὲ μνημονεύετε . . .

**Figure 7–5: Synopsis of Mark 8:17–18 and Matthew 16:9**

Interestingly, Matthew has introduced into all three ESCs his idiosyncratic ὀλιγόπιστος (8:26; 14:31; 16:8). Its introduction into ESC<sup>1</sup> is of little consequence since the Markan Jesus also questions the disciples' lack of faith (4:40). On the other hand, the introduction of ὀλιγόπιστος into ESC<sup>2</sup> and ESC<sup>3</sup> is significant because neither episode in Mark employs the language or concept of faith. Moreover, its introduction in Matthew coincides with the elimination of any reference to the disciples' hardness of heart in both ESC<sup>2</sup> and ESC<sup>3</sup>, not to mention the removal of the disciples' incomprehension in ESC<sup>2</sup> and its mitigation in ESC<sup>3</sup>. Matthew appears to have replaced Mark's Hardness of Heart motif with his own Little Faith motif. This creates a rhetorical link between all three ESCs and the Matthean Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount that deal with anxious self-concern (6:25–34), which is where ὀλιγόπιστος first appears (6:30). In Matthew, the disciples' maritime failures are now attributed to anxious self-concern, a much less serious offense than opposing Jesus' mission, which helps explain how ESC<sup>2</sup> and ESC<sup>3</sup> are both able to conclude on a positive note in Matthew. Whatever shortcomings the Matthean disciples manifest during the sea crossing, they are resolved by the end.

Finally, in a related redaction, the Matthean Jesus commends the Canaanite woman's *faith*, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you wish" (15:28), whereas the Markan Jesus commends the Syrophoenician woman's *understanding*, "On account of this word, go; the demon has left your daughter" (7:29). Here again, Matthew has replaced a reference to understanding with a reference to faith. By employing an expression that is surely designed to evoke *ὀλιγόπιστος*, Matthew creates a contrast between the Canaanite woman's great faith and the disciples' little faith, just as Mark did between the Syrophoenician woman's understanding about the loaves and the disciples' not understanding about the loaves. In effect, Matthew employs the same rhetorical strategy as Mark but changes the character trait being contrasted in keeping with his presentation of the nature of the disciples' failings.

Thus, in three key episodes taken over from Mark, Matthew has replaced references to hardness of heart and (mis)understanding with references to (lack of) faith. It is significant that these redactions have been performed on episodes that are directly related to Gentile mission in Mark.

#### MATTHEW ON GENTILE MISSION

Both Matthew and Mark have a demonstrable interest in Gentiles and Gentile mission, but they address these matters in significantly different ways in their respective narratives. For example, in Mark, Gentiles come to Jesus, Jesus goes to Gentiles, and Jesus sends his disciples to Gentiles. In Matthew, while Jesus may on occasion heal exceptional Gentiles who have sought him out (8:5–13; 15:21–28), he himself never initiates contact with Gentiles.<sup>53</sup> Also, the Matthean Jesus sends his disciples to Gentiles only after his death and resurrection (28:19–20). In fact, for the period of Jesus' earthly life, Matthew makes a concerted effort to eliminate any and all Markan references to Jesus going on or sending his disciples on Gentile mission and even appends statements by Jesus explicitly forbidding and renouncing Gentile mission. Thus,

---

<sup>53</sup> On three occasions in Matthew, Jesus makes his way to Gentile geopolitical space (8:28; 15:21; 16:4b–5), and all three times, he exorcises people who appear to be Gentiles (8:28–34; 15:21–28; 17:14–18). Nevertheless, these healings should not be taken as evidence that the Matthean Jesus intentionally engages in Gentile mission. Not only would the Matthean Jesus refute the claim (15:24), but all three trips were attempts to get away, either from the crowds (8:18), or from the Pharisees who are seeking his destruction (12:14) and took offense at his stance on matters of ritual purity (15:12), or from the Pharisees and Sadducees who come to test him (16:1–4). While Jesus heals Gentiles on these journeys into Gentile space, the non-missionary intent of the journeys indicates that these Gentiles also belong to the category of Gentiles who have sought Jesus out.

when the Matthean Jesus commissions the Twelve for their apostolic mission, his *first* instruction is, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (10:5–6). Likewise, he responds to the persistent supplications of the Canaanite woman with, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (15:24). This strong response replaces the Markan Jesus’ more amiable, “Let the children be satisfied first” (7:27). Hence, Matthew rules out any possibility of Jesus or his disciples engaging in Gentile mission.

Following this encounter with a Gentile woman, Matthew modifies the Markan Jesus’ itinerary. Mark presents Jesus withdrawing from Tyre, passing through Sidon and the middle of the *Decapolis*, and coming to the Sea of Galilee (7:31); whereas, Matthew presents Jesus simply as leaving from *there* and passing along the Sea of Galilee (15:29; Figure 7–6).

Mark 7:31	Matthew 15:29
καὶ πάλιν ἐξελθὼν ἐκ τῶν ὁρίων Τύρου ἦλθεν διὰ Σιδῶνος εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν τῆς Γαλιλαίας ἀνὰ μέσον τῶν ὁρίων Δεκαπόλεως.	καὶ μεταβάς ἐκεῖθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἦλθεν παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν τῆς Γαλιλαίας

**Figure 7–6: Synopsis of Mark 7:31 and Matthew 15:29**

By eliminating references to Tyre, Sidon, and the Decapolis, Matthew eliminates any suggestion that Jesus lingered in Gentile space<sup>54</sup> and instead presents him as immediately returning to Jewish Galilee. Consequently, the subsequent healings (15:30–31) and the feeding of the four thousand (15:32–39) occur in Jewish space and not in Gentile space as in Mark. Matthew’s modification of Jesus’ itinerary has in effect transformed a Gentile mission into a Jewish one.

Presumably, then, the Matthean feeding of the four thousand should be regarded as a *Jewish* feeding, yet some commentators argue that it (and even the preceding healings) show signs of being Gentile.<sup>55</sup> But, if so, why would Matthew change

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew* (SP 1; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1991), 239.

<sup>55</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 597. J. R. C. Cousland provides a list of commentaries on Matthew published in the 1990s, half of which stress the Jewish identity of the four thousand and half its Gentile identity (1n2–3). Cousland argues for the former (“The Feeding of the Four Thousand Gentiles in Matthew?: Matthew 15:29–39 as a Test Case,” *NovT* 41 (1999): 1–23).

the geopolitical space of the feeding without also changing the ethnic identity of its recipients? Perhaps, Jesus' healing and feeding of Gentiles who *come* to him is to be understood as a proleptic foreshadowing of the messianic banquet when "many [i.e., Gentiles] will *come* from the east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (8:11). Whatever the reason, while acknowledging that Gentiles were beneficiaries of Jesus' earthly ministry, Matthew wishes to stress, vis-à-vis Mark, that Jesus himself never actually engaged in Gentile mission during his lifetime.

Matthew also modifies another Markan itinerary. Matthew drops the reference to Bethsaida in ESC<sup>2</sup> (14:22 // Mark 6:45), which in Mark indicated that Jesus was sending his disciples on a Gentile mission, and thus eliminates the obvious discrepancy between intended and actual destinations (14:22, 34 // Mark 6:45, 53). In Mark, the discrepancy between Bethsaida and Gennesaret rendered ESC<sup>2</sup> a failed sea crossing and contributed to the negative characterization of the disciples. This, however, is not applicable to Matthew where, by the end of ESC<sup>2</sup>, the Matthean disciples are positively portrayed as recognizing and worshipping Jesus as the Son of God (14:33).

In the next major episode (15:1–20), Matthew cuts the Markan narrator's editorialization of Jesus' purity parable, "Thus, he rendered all foods clean" (Mark 7:19b // Matt 15:17). The typical explanation for this omission—as well as Matthew's redaction of the purity parable itself (cf. Matt 15:11 // Mark 7:15)—is that Mark 7:19b is too radical for the author and his reader's Jewish-Christian sensibilities.<sup>56</sup> Yet, there exists another possible explanation. Given that, in its context, Mark 7:19b serves to highlight Jesus' removal of one of the obstacles preventing his disciples from engaging in Gentile mission, and given that, in the immediately preceding episode, Matthew has eliminated all evidence of Jesus sending his disciples on Gentile mission, it is quite possible that Matthew's elimination of Mark 7:19b—and his redaction of Mark 7:15—is motivated, at least in part, by a concern to maintain the position that neither Jesus nor his disciples engaged in Gentile mission prior to his resurrection.

Finally, as was noted in Chapter Six, in ESC<sup>3</sup> (16:5–12), Matthew has changed the nature of the disciples' transgression. They are no longer accused of having hardened hearts due to their attempt to thwart a second Gentile feeding as in Mark but

---

<sup>56</sup> Hagner, *Matthew*, 2:429, 434–35; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:535.

are presented as not understanding Jesus' leaven warning due to their anxious self-concern over not having brought any bread.

## CONCLUSION

In Matthew's redaction of Mark's Sea Crossing movement, we observe three principle categories of redaction: (1) the mitigation of the Markan disciples' level of incomprehension, (2) the replacement of hardness of heart of the Markan disciples with the little faith of the Matthean disciples, and (3) the elimination of all references to Jesus or his disciples engaging in (or failing to engage in) Gentile mission during his lifetime. While redaction critics would consider (1) and (2) to be related redactions, I know of no one who suggests all three belong to the same redactional complex. That is, Matthew's redaction of Mark's Gentile mission motif is assumed to be independent of his redactions intended to "re-characterize" the disciples. Yet, when we consider Matthew's redaction of Mark in light of the narrative logic of the Markan disciples' incomprehension, in which (1), (2), and (3) are interrelated, the distinct possibility arises that all three belong to the same redactional complex in Matthew. In other words, if the Markan disciples' opposition to Gentile mission is foundational to their negative characterization, then it seems more than coincidental that the much more positive characterization of the Matthean disciples' should be accompanied by the elimination of Mark's Gentile mission motif. After all, Matthew's redactional activity is not generally performed on a pericope-by-pericope basis but sustained over the course of many episodes. That is, Matthew does not simply modify individual episodes or individual elements within episodes but transforms whole complexes of material, making modifications at the level of motif and theme.

Given this evidence, I would propose that the author of Matthew has understood the nature and narrative logic of the Markan disciples' incomprehension in the way this study has argued it should be understood and, moreover, has replaced it with his own. Whereas the Markan disciples' incomprehension is rooted in their hardened opposition to Gentile mission, the incomprehension of the Matthean disciples stems from their little faith, their anxious self-concern. In ESC<sup>1</sup>, the Matthean disciples worry about perishing (8:24), as does Peter in ESC<sup>2</sup> (14:30), and in ESC<sup>3</sup>, they worry about lacking food (16:7). Having little faith, however, is not as serious a condition as having hardened hearts. Consequently, the misunderstandings of the

Matthean disciples' are generally short-lived. In ESC<sup>2</sup>, they eventually recognize Jesus as the Son of God and so worship him (14:33); in ESC<sup>3</sup>, they eventually understand the meaning of Jesus' leaven parable (16:12). Thus, in order to redefine the nature of the disciples' incomprehension, Matthew does not merely present the disciples as understanding more than their Markan counterparts, he changes the underlying cause of their incomprehension from hardness of heart to anxious self-concern. This would explain, at least in part, why Matthew has redacted Mark's Gentile mission motif in the way he has.

While there is much to commend this understanding of Matthew's redaction of Mark's Sea Crossing movement, I offer it as a tentative hypothesis, for it requires further study, which goes beyond the scope of this investigation. Yet, if this hypothesis were to be substantiated, at least in broad outline, then we would have in Matthew evidence of a first-century reader of Mark who reads the narrative logic of the disciples' incomprehension as I propose reading it, thus offering additional support for my reading of Mark.

### CONCLUSION TO THE STUDY

Without a doubt, the Markan disciples are round characters, possessing a variety of conflicting traits and appearing in both a positive and a negative light. They are, in the words of E. M. Forster, "capable of surprising in a convincing way."<sup>57</sup> This is true not least in the Sea Crossing movement where the disciples start out as insiders who lack insight and end up as outsiders who can suddenly see. In a sense, this study's objective has been to trace some of the contours of the disciples' roundness, to explore in greater depth and detail aspects of their character that contribute to their complexity. Where commentators have, on the whole, merely perceived lack of faith and incomprehension, I have detected signs of resistance, either in addition to or instead of these other negative traits. Thus, we end up with a fuller, more complete portrait of the Markan disciples in the Sea Crossing movement. Their resistance and opposition to Gentile mission must now be taken into consideration when reading Mark or when developing narrative and historical hypotheses that depend upon or are informed by the ways in which the Markan disciples are portrayed.

---

<sup>57</sup> This is Forster's basic definition of a round character (*Aspects of the Novel* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1956), 78).

## THE EXPLANATORY POWER OF RESISTANCE

By positing the disciples' resistance to Gentile mission, this study is able to give account of a number of significant features and key developments within the Markan narrative. For example, positing resistance led to the discovery of the narrative logic of the disciples' incomprehension within the Sea Crossing movement. According to Mark, the disciple's inability to comprehend Jesus' messianic identity does not result from general human ignorance or from "the mystery of Jesus' person [being] too great for human beings to perceive without divine assistance,"<sup>58</sup> essentially non-culpable offenses.<sup>59</sup> Instead the disciples' inability to recognize Jesus is a product of their inability to discern the universal scope of Jesus' messianic vocation due to their fundamental opposition to his Gentile mission and their participation in it (Thesis A). Here, willful opposition on the part of the disciples offers a better reading of the hardness-of-heart charge (6:52; 8:17) and of the harsh criticism the disciples receive from Jesus (8:17–18), both of which imply the disciples' culpability. In turn, the narrative logic of incomprehension provides the background for understanding the narrative logic of Peter's unexpected comprehension of Jesus' messianic identity, which indicates that the disciples have finally come to accept Jesus' Gentile mission and their participation in it (Thesis B).

The disciples' resistance also helps explain some of the more mysterious and idiosyncratic aspects of Mark's story. For example, we now know that Jesus must *force* his disciples to go to Bethsaida (6:45) because they are resistant to engaging in an apostolic mission that would require them to accept Gentile hospitality, which also explains their unexpected arrival at Gennesaret. We also know that when the disciples, having already witnessed one miraculous feeding, ask Jesus, "How can anyone satisfy *these* people with loaves here in the wilderness?" (8:4), they are not being incredibly obtuse but incredibly obstinate.

Additionally, the disciples' resistance to Gentile mission provides a context for understanding that *understanding about the loaves* specifically relates to the meaning and significance of the loaves leftover from the feedings. This in turn helps the reader understand the ironic nature of the exchange between Jesus and Syrophoenician with its interest in loaves and crumbs and helps the reader understand why Jesus

---

<sup>58</sup> Matera, "Incomprehension," 172.

<sup>59</sup> Heil, *Walking*, 144; Malbon, "Jesus," 373–74; Matera, "Incomprehension," 162, 72.

focuses upon the leftover loaves from the feedings when addressing the disciples' blindness, deafness, and hardness of heart in ESC<sup>3</sup>. To understand about the loaves is to understand that God's intentions are to bless all nations through Israel and that opening Israel's eschatological inheritance to the Gentiles will, in no way, lead to the disenfranchisement of the Jews; the leftover loaves are a parable of the sufficiency of God's salvific blessings for both Jews and Gentiles. In short, positing resistance and opposition to Gentile mission on the part of the Markan disciples has significant explanatory power.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 6th ed. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1993.
- Achtemeier, Paul J. "Person and Deed: Jesus and the Storm-Tossed Sea." *Interpretation* 16 (1962): 169–76.
- Achtemeier, Paul J. "Toward the Isolation of Pre-Markan Miracle Catenae." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 89 (1970): 265–91.
- Achtemeier, Paul J. "The Origin and Function of the Pre-Markan Miracle Catenae." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91 (1972): 198–221.
- Achtemeier, Paul J. "Mark as Interpreter of the Jesus Traditions." *Interpretation* 32 (1978): 339–52.
- Achtemeier, Paul J. *Mark*. 2d. ed Proclamation. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986.
- Allan, Keith. *Natural Language Semantics*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001.
- Allison, Dale C., Jr. "Psalm 23 (22) in Early Christianity: A Suggestion." *Irish Biblical Studies* 5 (1983): 132–37.
- Allison, Dale C., Jr. *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993.
- Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. New York: Basic Books, 1981.
- Alter, Robert. *The Pleasures of Reading: In an Ideological Age*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989.
- Anderson, Janice Capel. *Matthew's Narrative Web*. Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series 91. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994.
- Anderson, Paul H. *The Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus: Modern Foundations Reconsidered*. Library of Biblical Studies. London: T&T Clark, 2006.
- Arav, Rami. "New Testament Archaeology and the Case of Bethsaida." Pages 75–91 in *Das Ende der Tage und die Gegenwart des Heils: Begegnungen mit dem Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt*. Edited by Michael Becker and Wolfgang Fenske. Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums 44. Leiden: Brill, 1999.
- Baarlink, Heinrich. *Anfängliches Evangelium: Ein Beitrag zur näheren Bestimmung der theologischen Motive im Markusevangelium*. Kampen: Kok, 1977.

- Balz, Horst, and Gerhard Schneider, eds. *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*. 3 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990–1993.
- Banks, Robert J. *Jesus and the Law in the Synoptic Tradition*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 28. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.
- Barrett, C. K. *The Gospel according to St. John*. 2d. ed. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978.
- Barton, George A. "The Use of ἐπιτιμᾶν in Mark 8:30 and 3:12." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 41 (1922): 233–36.
- Bassler, Jouette M. "The Parable of the Loaves." *Journal of Religion* 66 (1986): 157–72.
- Bauckham, Richard. "John for Readers of Mark." Pages 147–71 in *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences*. Edited by Richard Bauckham. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- Bauckham, Richard. "James, Peter, and the Gentiles." Pages 91–142 in *The Missions of James, Peter, and Paul: Tensions in Early Christianity*. Edited by Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans. Supplements to Novum Testamentum 115. Leiden: Brill, 2005.
- Bauer, Walter, Frederick William Danker, William Frederick Arndt, and Felix Wilbur Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3d. ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Beavis, Mary Ann. *Mark's Audience: The Literary and Social Setting of Mark 4.11–12*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989.
- Beck, Norman A. "The Last Supper as an Efficacious Symbolic Act." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 89 (1970): 192–98.
- Beck, Norman A. "Reclaiming a Biblical Text: The Mark 8:14–21 Discussion about Bread in the Boat." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 43 (1981): 49–56.
- Bekker-Nielsen, Tønnes. "Fish in the Ancient Economy." Pages 29–37 in *Ancient History Matters: Studies Presented to Jens Erik Skydsgaard on His Seventieth Birthday*. Edited by Karen Ascani and et al. *Analecta Romana Supplementum* 30. Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2002.
- Bekker-Nielsen, Tønnes. "Nets, Boats and Fishing in the Roman World." *Classica et Mediaevalia* 53 (2002): 215–33.
- Bekker-Nielsen, Tønnes, ed. *Ancient Fishing and Fish Processing in the Black Sea Region*. Black Sea Studies 2. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2005.

- Best, Ernest. "The Role of the Disciples in Mark." *New Testament Studies* 23 (1977): 377–401.
- Best, Ernest. "The Miracles in Mark." Pages 177–96 in *Disciples and Discipleship: Studies in the Gospel according to Mark*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986. Repr. from *Review and Expositor* 75 (1978): 539–54.
- Best, Ernest. *Following Jesus: Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark*. Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series 4. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981.
- Bird, C. H. "Some γάρ Clauses in St. Mark's Gospel." *Journal of Theological Studies* 4 (1953): 171–87.
- Bird, Michael F. "Jesus and the Gentiles after Jeremias: Patterns and Prospects." *Currents in Biblical Research* 4 (2005): 83–108.
- Black, C. Clifton. *The Disciples according to Mark: Markan Redaction in Current Debate*. Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series 27. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989.
- Black, Matthew. *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*. 2d. ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954.
- Blass, Friedrich, Albert Debrunner, and Robert Walter Funk. *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.
- Bock, Darrell L. *Luke*. 2 vols. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 3. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994.
- Bockmuehl, Markus. "Simon Peter and Bethsaida." Pages 53–90 in *The Missions of James, Peter, and Paul: Tensions in Early Christianity*. Edited by Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans. Supplements to Novum Testamentum 115. Leiden: Brill, 2005.
- Bolt, Peter G. *Jesus' Defeat of Death: Persuading Mark's Early Readers*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 125. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Boobyer, G. H. "The Eucharistic Interpretation of the Miracle of the Loaves in St. Mark's Gospel." *Journal of Theological Studies* 3 (1952): 161–71.
- Boobyer, G. H. "Galilee and Galileans in St Mark's Gospel." *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 35 (1952): 334–48.
- Boobyer, G. H. "Miracle of the Loaves and the Gentiles in St. Mark's Gospel." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 6 (1953): 77–87.

- Booth, Roger P. *Jesus and the Laws of Purity: Tradition History and Legal History in Mark 7*. Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series 13. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986.
- Booth, Wayne C. *A Rhetoric of Irony*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.
- Borgen, Peder. *Bread from Heaven: An Exegetical Study of the Concept of Manna in the Gospel of John and the Writings of Philo*. Novum Testamentum Supplements 10. Leiden: Brill, 1965.
- Boring, M. Eugene. "Mark 1:1–15 and the Beginning of the Gospel." *Semeia* 52 (1990): 43–81.
- Boring, M. Eugene. *Mark*. New Testament Library. Louisville, Ky.: John Knox, 2006.
- Boring, M. Eugene, Klaus Berger, and Carsten Colpe, eds. *Hellenistic Commentary to the New Testament*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1995.
- Boucher, Madeleine. *The Mysterious Parable: A Literary Study*. Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 6. Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1977.
- Bowman, John. *The Gospel of Mark: The New Christian Jewish Passover Haggadah*. Studia post-biblica 8. Leiden: Brill, 1965.
- Bratcher, Robert G., and Eugene A. Nida. *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of Mark*. Helps for Translators 2. Leiden: Brill, 1961.
- Brett, Laurence F. X. "Suggestions for an Analysis of Mark's Arrangement." Pages 174–90 in *Mark* by C. S. Mann. Anchor Bible 27. New York: Doubleday, 1986.
- Broadhead, Edwin K. *Teaching with Authority: Miracles and Christology in the Gospel of Mark*. Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series 74. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992.
- Broadhead, Edwin K. "Jesus the Nazarene: Narrative Strategy and Christological Imagery in the Gospel of Mark." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 52 (1993): 3–18.
- Broadhead, Edwin K. *Mark*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001.
- Brown, Colin, ed. *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. 4 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975–1985.
- Brown, Colin. "The Jesus of Mark's Gospel." Pages 26–53 in *Jesus Then and Now: Images of Jesus in History and Christology*. Edited by Marvin Meyer and Charles Hughes. Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2001.

- Brown, Jeannine K. *The Disciples in Narrative Perspective: The Portrayal and Function of the Matthean Disciples*. Society of Biblical Literature Academia Biblica 9. Leiden: Brill, 2002.
- Brown, Raymond E. "Not Jewish Christianity and Gentile Christianity but Types of Jewish/Gentile Christianity." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 45 (1983): 74–79.
- Bryan, Christopher. *A Preface to Mark: Notes on the Gospel in its Literary and Cultural Setting*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Burke, Kenneth. *The Philosophy of Literary Form*. 3d ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973.
- Burkill, T. A. *Mysterious Revelation: An Examination of the Philosophy of St Mark's Gospel*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1963.
- Burkill, T. A. *New Light on the Earliest Gospel: Seven Markan Studies*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1972.
- Calloud, Jean. "Toward a Structural Analysis of the Gospel of Mark." *Semeia* 16 (1979): 133–65.
- Callow, Kathleen. *Discourse Considerations in Translating the Word of God*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974.
- Camery-Hoggatt, Jerry. *Irony in Mark's Gospel: Text and Subtext*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 72. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Carroll, Robert P. *Jeremiah*. Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986.
- Casey, Maurice. "Culture and Historicity: The Plucking of the Grain (Mark 2.23–28)." *New Testament Studies* 34 (1988): 1–23.
- Chancey, Mark A. *The Myth of a Gentile Galilee*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 118. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Chancey, Mark A. *Greco-Roman Culture and the Galilee of Jesus*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 134. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Chapman, Dean W. "Locating the Gospel of Mark: A Model of Agrarian Biography." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 25 (1995): 24–36.
- Chatman, Seymour. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978.
- Chronis, Harry L. "To Reveal and to Conceal: A Literary-Critical Perspective on 'the Son of Man' in Mark." *New Testament Studies* 51 (2005): 459–81.

- Clark, K. W., "Sea of Galilee." Pages 348–50 in vol. 2 of *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. Edited by G. A. Buttrick. 4 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 1962.
- Cohn-Sherbok, D. M. "An Analysis of Jesus' Arguments Concerning the Plucking of Grain on the Sabbath." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 2 (1979): 31–41.
- Collins, Adela Yarbro. "Rulers, Divine Men, and Walking on the Water (Mark 6:45–52)." Pages 207–27 in *Religious Propaganda and Missionary Competition in the New Testament World: Essays Honoring Dieter Georgi*. Edited by Lukas Bornmann, Kelly Del Tredici, and Angela Standhartinger. *Novum Testamentum Supplements* 74. Leiden: Brill, 1994.
- Collins, Adela Yarbro. *Mark: A Commentary*. Hermeneia. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007.
- Cook, John G. *The Structure and Persuasive Power of Mark: A Linguistic Approach*. *Semeia Studies*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995.
- Cope, O. L. *Matthew: A Scribe Trained for the Kingdom of Heaven*. Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 5. Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1976.
- Cotter, Wendy, ed. *Miracles in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook for the Study of New Testament Miracle Stories*. Context of Early Christianity 1. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Countryman, L. W. "How Many Baskets Full?: Mark 8:14–21 and the Value of Miracles in Mark." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 47 (1985): 643–55.
- Cousland, J. R. C. "The Feeding of the Four Thousand Gentiles in Matthew?: Matthew 15:29–39 as a Test Case." *Novum Testamentum* 41 (1999): 1–23.
- Cranfield, C. E. B., "Gospel of Mark." Pages 267–77 in vol. 3 of *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. Edited by G. A. Buttrick. 4 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 1962.
- Croft, William, and D. Alan Cruse. *Cognitive Linguistics*. Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Crossan, John Dominic. "Mark and the Relatives of Jesus." *Novum Testamentum* 15 (1973): 81–113.
- Crossan, John Dominic. *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991.
- Crossley, James G. "Halakah and Mark 7.4: ' . . . and beds'." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 25 (2003): 433–47.

- Crossley, James G. *The Date of Mark's Gospel: Insight from the Law in Earliest Christianity*. Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series 266. London: T&T Clark, 2004.
- Culpepper, R. Alan. "An Outline of the Gospel according to Mark." *Review and Expositor* 75 (1978): 619–22.
- Culpepper, R. Alan. "The Passion and Resurrection in Mark." *Review and Expositor* 75 (1978): 583–600.
- Culpepper, R. Alan. *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983.
- Culpepper, R. Alan. *The Gospel and Letters of John*. Interpreting Biblical Texts. Nashville: Abingdon, 1998.
- Dalman, Gustaf Hermann. *Jesus-Jeshua: Studies in the Gospels*. Translated by Paul P. Levertoff. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1929.
- Dana, H. E., and Julius R. Mantey. *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1957.
- Danove, Paul L. *The End of Mark's Story: A Methodological Study*. Biblical Interpretation Series 3. Leiden: Brill, 1993.
- Danove, Paul L. "The Theory of Construction Grammar and its Application to New Testament Greek." Pages 119–51 in *Biblical Greek Language and Linguistics: Open Questions in Current Research*. Edited by Stanley E. Porter and D. A. Carson. Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series 80. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993.
- Danove, Paul L. "The Narrative Rhetoric of Mark's Ambiguous Characterization of the Disciples." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 70 (1998): 21–38.
- Danove, Paul L. "Verbs of Experience: Toward a Lexicon Detailing the Argument Structures Assigned by Verbs." Pages 144–205 in *Linguistics and the New Testament: Critical Junctures*. Edited by Stanley E. Porter and D. A. Carson. Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series 168; Studies in New Testament Greek 5. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.
- Danove, Paul L. *Linguistics and Exegesis in the Gospel of Mark: Applications of a Case Frame Analysis and Lexicon*. Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series 218; Studies in New Testament Greek 10. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001.
- Danove, Paul L. "The Narrative Function of Mark's Characterization of God." *Novum Testamentum* 43 (2001): 12–30.

- Danove, Paul L. "A Rhetorical Analysis of Mark's Construction of Discipleship." Pages 280–96 in *Rhetorical Criticism and the Bible*. Edited by Stanley E. Porter and Dennis L. Stamps. Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series 195. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002.
- Danove, Paul L. "The Rhetoric of the Characterization of Jesus as the Son of Man and Christ in Mark." *Biblica* 84 (2003): 16–34.
- Danove, Paul L. *The Rhetoric of the Characterization of God, Jesus, and Jesus' Disciples in the Gospel of Mark*. Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series 290. New York: T&T Clark, 2005.
- Daube, David. "Responsibilities of Master and Disciples in the Gospels." *New Testament Studies* 19 (1972–73): 1–15.
- Davies, W. D., and Dale C. Allison, Jr. *The Gospel according to St. Matthew*. 3 vols. International Critical Commentary. London: T&T Clark, 2004.
- Davis, Philip G. "Mark's Christological Paradox." *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989): 3–18.
- DeMoss, Matthew S. *Pocket Dictionary for the Study of New Testament Greek*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2001.
- Derrett, J. Duncan M. "Law in the New Testament: The Syro-Phoenician Woman and the Centurion of Capernaum." *Novum Testamentum* 15 (1973): 161–86.
- Derrett, J. Duncan M. "Contributions to the Study of the Gerasene Demoniac." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 3 (1979): 2–17.
- Derrett, J. Duncan M. "Why and How Jesus Walked on the Sea." *Novum Testamentum* 23 (1981): 330–48.
- Derrett, J. Duncan M. "Crumbs in Mark." *Downside Review* 102 (1984): 12–21.
- Dewey, Joanna. "The Literary Structure of the Controversy Stories in Mark 2:1–3:6." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 92 (1973): 394–401.
- Dewey, Joanna. *Markan Public Debate: Literary Technique, Concentric Structure and Theology in Mark 2:1–3:6*. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 48. Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1980.
- Dewey, Joanna. "Point of View and the Disciples in Mark." *SBL Seminar Papers*, 1982. Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers 21. Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982.
- Dewey, Joanna. "Oral Methods of Structuring Narrative in Mark." *Interpretation* 43 (1989): 32–44.



- Dewey, Joanna. "Mark as Interwoven Tapestry: Forecasts and Echoes for a Listening Audience." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 53 (1991): 221–36.
- Dewey, Joanna. "The Gospel of Mark as an Oral-Aural Event: Implications for Interpretation." Pages 145–63 in *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament*. Edited by Edgar V. McKnight and Elizabeth Struthers Malbon. Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1994.
- Dewey, Joanna. "Textuality in an Oral Culture: a Survey of the Pauline Traditions." *Semeia* 65 (1994): 37–65.
- Dewey, Joanna. "Jesus' Healings of Women: Conformity and Non-Conformity to Dominant Cultural Values as Clues for Historical Reconstruction." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 24 (1995): 122–31.
- Dodd, C. H. "The Dialogue Form in the Gospels." *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 37 (1954): 54–70.
- Dodd, C. H. *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965.
- Donahue, John R. "Jesus as the Parable of God in the Gospel of Mark." *Interpretation* 32 (1978): 369–86.
- Donahue, John R. *Theology and Setting of Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark*. Ashland, Ohio: Marquette University Press, 1983.
- Donahue, John R. *The Gospel in Parable: Metaphor, Narrative, and Theology in the Synoptic Gospels*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988.
- Donahue, John R. "Redaction Criticism: Has the *Hauptstrasse* Become a *Sackgasse*?" Pages 27–57 in *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament*. Edited by Edgar V. McKnight and Elizabeth Struthers Malbon. Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1994.
- Donahue, John R., and Daniel J. Harrington. *The Gospel of Mark*. Sacra Pagina 2. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2002.
- Dowd, Sharyn E. *Reading Mark: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Second Gospel*. Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 2000.
- Drury, John. *The Parables in the Gospels: History and Allegory*. London: SPCK, 1985.
- Drury, John. "Mark." Pages 402–17 in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*. Edited by Robert Alter and Frank Kermode. London: Collins, 1987.
- Drury, John. "Understanding the Bread: Disruption and Aggregation, Secrecy and Revelation in Mark's Gospel." Pages 98–119 in "Not in Heaven": *Coherence*

- and Complexity in Biblical Narrative. Jason P. Rosenblatt and Joseph C. Sitterson Jr., 1991.
- Dufton, Francis. "The Syrophoenician Woman and Her Dogs." *Expository Times* 100 (1989): 417.
- Dunn, James D. G. *Romans 9–16*. Word Biblical Commentary 38b. Dallas: Word Books, 1988.
- Dunn, James D. G. "Are You the Messiah?: Is the Crux of Mark 14:61–62 Resolvable?" Pages 1–22 in *Christology, Controversy and Community: New Testament Essays in Honour of David R. Catchpole*. Edited by David G. Horrell and Christopher M. Tuckett. Novum Testamentum Supplements 99. Leiden: Brill, 2000.
- Dwyer, Timothy. "The Motif of Wonder in the Gospel of Mark." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 57 (1995): 49–59.
- Dwyer, Timothy. *The Motif of Wonder in the Gospel of Mark*. Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series 128. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.
- Ebeling, H. J. *Das Messiasgeheimnis und die Botschaft des Marcus-Evangelisten*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 19. Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1939.
- Eco, Umberto. *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979.
- Edwards, James R. "Markan Sandwiches: The Significance of Interpolations in Markan Narratives." *Novum Testamentum* 31 (1989): 193–216.
- Edwards, James R. *The Gospel according to Mark*. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.
- Elliott, J. K. *The Language and Style of the Gospel of Mark: An Edition of C. H. Turner's "Notes on Marcan Usage" Together with Other Comparable Studies*. Novum Testamentum Supplements 71. Leiden: Brill, 1993.
- Evans, Craig A. "The Function of Isaiah 6:9–10 in Mark and John." *Novum Testamentum* 24 (1982): 124–38.
- Evans, Craig A. *To See and Not Perceive: Isaiah 6.9–10 in Early Jewish and Christian Interpretation*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series 64. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989.
- Evans, Craig A. "Hardness of Heart." Pages 298–99 in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Edited by Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1992.

- Evans, Craig A. *Mark 8:27–16:20*. Word Biblical Commentary 34b. Dallas: Word Books, 2001.
- Eve, Eric. "Spit in Your Eye: The Blind Man of Bethsaida and the Blind Man of Alexandria." *New Testament Studies* 54 (2007): 1–17.
- Fander, Monika. *Die Stellung der Frau im Markusevangelium. Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung kultur- und religionsgeschichtlicher Hintergründe*. Münsteraner Theologische Abhandlungen 8. Altenberge: Telos-Verlag, 1989.
- Farrer, A. M. "Loaves and Thousands." *Journal of Theological Studies* 4 (1953): 1–14.
- Faw, Chalmer E. "The Outline of Mark." *Journal of Bible and Religion* 25 (1957): 19–23.
- Fillmore, Charles J. "The Case for Case." Pages 1–88 in *Universals in Linguistic Theory*. Edited by Emmon Bach and Robert T. Harms. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1968.
- Fillmore, Charles J. "An Alternative to Checklist Theories of Meaning." *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society* 1 (1975): 123–31.
- Fillmore, Charles J. "Scenes-and-Frames semantics." Pages 55–81 in *Linguistic Structure Processing*. Edited by A Zampolli. Amsterdam: North Holland, 1977.
- Fillmore, Charles J. "Frames and the Semantics of Understanding." *Quaderni di Semantica* 6 (1985): 222–54.
- Flesher, Paul V. M. "Bread of the Presence." Pages 780–81 in vol. 1 of *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Forster, E. M. *Aspects of the Novel*. San Diego: Harcourt, 1956.
- Foss, Sonja K. *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice*. 3d. ed. Long Grove, Ill.: Waveland, 2004.
- Foss, Sonja K., Karen A. Foss, and Robert Trapp. *Contemporary Perspectives on Rhetoric*. 3d. ed. Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland, 2002.
- Fowler, Robert M. "The Feeding Stories in the Gospel of Mark." Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1978.
- Fowler, Robert M. *Loaves and Fishes: The Function of the Feeding Stories in the Gospel of Mark*. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 54. Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1981.
- Fowler, Robert M. *Let the Reader Understand: Reader-Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991.

- Fowler, Robert M. "Reader-Response Criticism: Figuring Mark's Reader." *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*. Edited by Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992.
- Fowler, Robert M. "The Rhetoric of Direction and Indirection in the Gospel of Mark." Pages 207–27 in *The Interpretation of Mark*. 2d ed. Edited by William R. Telford. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995. *Semeia* 48 (1989): 115–34.
- France, R. T. *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.
- France, R. T. *Divine Government: God's Kingship in the Gospel of Mark*. Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2003.
- France, R. T. *The Gospel of Matthew*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.
- Freedman, William. "The Literary Motif: A Definition and Evaluation." Pages 200–12 in *Essentials of the Theory of Fiction*. 2d. ed. Edited by Michael J. Hoffman and Patrick D. Murphy. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996.
- Frei, Hans W. *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1980.
- Freyne, Seán. *Galilee: From Alexander the Great to Hadrian 323 BCE to 135 CE*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1980.
- Freyne, Seán. *Galilee, Jesus, and the Gospels: Literary Approaches and Historical Investigations*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988.
- Freyne, Seán. "Sea of Galilee." Pages 899–91 in vol. 2 of *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Freyne, Seán. *Jesus: A Jewish Galilean*. London: T&T Clark, 2004.
- Gale Group. "Glossary of Literary Terms." No pages. Cited 16 May 2006. Online: [http://www.galegroup.com/free\\_resources/glossary/glossary\\_im.htm](http://www.galegroup.com/free_resources/glossary/glossary_im.htm).
- Gallant, Thomas W. *A Fisherman's Tale: An Analysis of the Potential Productivity of Fishing in the Ancient World*. Ghent: Belgian Archaeological Mission, 1985.
- Garnsey, Peter, ed. *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Garrett, Susan R. "Disciples on Trial." *The Christian Century* (1998): 396–99.
- Gibson, Jeffrey B. "The Rebuke of the Disciples in Mark 8.14–21." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 27 (1986): 31–47.

- Gibson, Jeffrey B. "Mark 8.12a: Why Does Jesus 'Sigh Deeply'?" *The Bible Translator* 38 (1987): 122–25.
- Gibson, Jeffrey B. "Jesus' Refusal to Produce a 'Sign' (Mk 8.11–13)." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 38 (1990): 37–66.
- Gibson, Jeffrey B. "Jesus' Wilderness Temptation according to Mark." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 53 (1994): 3–34.
- Gibson, Jeffrey B. *The Temptations of Jesus in Early Christianity*. Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series 112. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995.
- Gibson, Jeffrey B. "Another Look at Why Jesus 'Sighs Deeply': ἀναστενάζω in Mark 8:12a." *Journal of Theological Studies* 47 (1996): 131–40.
- Glasswell, Mark Errol. "The Use of Miracles in the Markan Gospel." Pages 151–62 in *Miracles: Cambridge Studies in Their Philosophy and History*. Edited by C. F. D. Moule. London: A. R. Mowbray, 1965.
- Goffman, Erving. *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974.
- Goldberg, Adele E. *Constructions: A Construction Grammar Approach to Argument Structure*. Cognitive Theory of Language and Culture Series. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- Gould, Ezra P. *The Gospel according to St. Mark*. International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1896.
- Guelich, Robert A. *Mark 1–8:26*. Word Biblical Commentary 34a. Dallas: Word Books, 1989.
- Guelich, Robert A. "Gospel of Mark." Pages 512–25 in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Edited by Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1992.
- Gundry, Robert H. *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.
- Gundry, Robert H. "Richard A. Horsley's *Hearing the Whole Story*: A Critical Review of its Postcolonial Slant." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26 (2003): 131–49.
- Gunn, David M. "Narrative Criticism." Pages 171–95 in *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*. Edited by Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster, 1993.

- Hagner, Donald A. *Matthew*. 2 vols. Word Biblical Commentary 33. Dallas: Word Books, 1993–1995.
- Hahn, Ferdinand. *Mission in the New Testament*. Translated by Frank Clarke. Studies in Biblical Theology 47. London: SCM Press, 1965.
- Hanson, James S. *The Endangered Promises: Conflict in Mark*. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 171. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000.
- Harrington, Daniel J. *The Gospel of Matthew*. Sacra Pagina 1. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1991.
- Harrington, Daniel J. *What Are They Saying about Mark?* 2d. ed. Mahwah, N. J.: Paulist Press, 2005.
- Harstine, Stan. “Un-Doubting Thomas: Recognition Scenes in the Ancient World.” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 33 (2006): 435–47.
- Hawkin, David J. “The Incomprehension of the Disciples in the Markan Redaction.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91 (1972): 491–500.
- Hays, Richard B. *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1–4:11*. 2d ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.
- Hedrick, Charles W. “What Is a Gospel? Geography, Time and Narrative Structure.” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 10 (1983): 255–68.
- Hedrick, Charles W. “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.
- Hegermann, Harald. “Bethsaida und Gennesar: Eine traditions- und redaktionsgeschichtliche Studie zu Mc 4–8.” Pages 130–40 in *Judentum, Urchristentum, Kirche: Festschrift für Joachim Jeremias*. Walther Eltester. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 26. Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1960.
- Heil, John Paul. *Jesus Walking on the Sea: Meaning and Gospel Functions of Matt 14:22–33, Mark 6:45–52 and John 6:15b–21*. Analecta biblica 87. Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981.
- Heil, John Paul. *The Gospel of Mark as a Model for Action: A Reader-Response Commentary*. New York: Paulist Press, 1992.
- Henderson, Suzanne Watts. “‘Concerning the Loaves’: Comprehending Incomprehension in Mark 6.45–52.” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 83 (2001): 3–26.

- Henderson, Suzanne Watts. *Christology and Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 135. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Hengel, Martin. *The Johannine Question*. Translated by John Bowden. London: SCM Press, 1989.
- Hooker, Morna. *The Gospel according to Saint Mark*. Black's New Testament Commentaries 2. London: A&C Black, 1991.
- Horn, F. W. "Holy Spirit." Pages 261–80 in vol. 3 of *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Horsley, Richard A. *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark's Gospel*. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2001.
- Horsley, Richard A. "A Response to Robert Gundry's Review of *Hearing the Whole Story*." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26 (2003): 151–69.
- Horsley, Richard A., Jonathan A. Draper, and John Miles Foley, eds. *Performing the Gospel — Orality, Memory, and Mark: Essays Dedicated to Werner Kelber*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006.
- Howard, C. D. C. "Blindness and Deafness." Pages 81–82 in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Edited by Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1992.
- Hultgren, Arland J. "The Formation of the Sabbath Pericope in Mark 2,23–28." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91 (1972): 38–43.
- Hurtado, Larry W. *Mark*. New International Biblical Commentary on the New Testament 2. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1989.
- Iser, Wolfgang. *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.
- Iverson, Kelly R. *Gentiles in the Gospel of Mark: 'Even the Dogs Under the Table Eat the Children's Crumbs'*. Library of New Testament Studies 339. London: T&T Clark, 2007.
- Janda, Laura. "Cognitive Linguistics." Paper presented at The Future of Slavic Linguistics in America (SLING2K), February 18, 2000.
- Jeremias, Joachim. *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*. 3d ed. Translated by Norman Perrin. London: SCM Press, 1966.
- Johnson, Earl S. "Mark VIII.22–26: The Blind Man from Bethsaida." *New Testament Studies* 25 (1979): 370–83.

- Josephus*. Translated by H. St. J. Thackeray, Ralph Marcus, Allen Wikgren, and Louis H. Feldman. 12 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1926–1965.
- Juel, Donald H. *Messiah and Temple: The Trial of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark*. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 31. Missoula, Mo.: Scholars Press, 1977.
- Juel, Donald H. *Mark*. Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990.
- Juel, Donald H. *A Master of Surprise: Mark Interpreted*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994.
- Kato, Zenji. *Die Völkermision im Markusevangelium: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung*. Europäische Hochschulschriften 23/252. Bern: Peter Lang, 1986.
- Kealy, Séan P. *Mark's Gospel: A History of Its Interpretation*. New York: Paulist, 1982.
- Keck, Leander E. "Mark 3:7–12 and Mark's Christology." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 84 (1965): 341–59.
- Kee, Howard Clark. "The Terminology of Mark's Exorcism Stories." *New Testament Studies* 14 (1968): 232–46.
- Kee, Howard Clark. *Community of the New Age: Studies in Mark's Gospel*. London: SCM Press, 1977.
- Kee, Howard Clark. "Mark's Gospel in Recent Research." *Interpretation* 32 (1978): 353–68.
- Keegan, T. J. "The Parable of the Sower and Markan Jewish Leaders." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 56 (1994): 501–18.
- Kelber, Werner H. *The Kingdom in Mark: A New Place and a New Time*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974.
- Kelber, Werner H. "Mark and Oral Tradition." *Semeia* 16 (1979): 7–55.
- Kelber, Werner H. *Mark's Story of Jesus*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979.
- Kelber, Werner H. *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982.
- Kelber, Werner H. "Apostolic Tradition and the Form of the Gospel." Pages 24–46 in *Discipleship in the New Testament*. Edited by Fernando F. Segovia. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985.



- Kennedy, Michael, ed. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music*. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Kingsbury, Jack Dean. *Matthew as Story*. 2d ed. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988.
- Kingsbury, Jack Dean. *Conflict in Mark: Jesus, Authorities, Disciples*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989.
- Kittel, Gerhard, and G. Friedrich, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976.
- Knight, Virginia H. *The Renewal of Epic: Responses to Homer in the Argonautica of Apollonius*. Mnemosyne, bibliotheca classica Batava: Supplementum 152. Leiden: Brill, 1995.
- Koch, Dietrich-Alex. "Inhaltliche Gliederung und geographischer Aufriss im Markusevangelium." *New Testament Studies* 29 (1983): 145–66.
- Koehler, Ludwig, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann Jakob Stamm. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament: Study Edition*. Edited and translated by M. E. J. Richardson. 4 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2001.
- Koenig, John. *The Feast of the World's Redemption: Eucharistic Origins and Christian Mission*. Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2000.
- Kupp, David D. *Matthew's Emmanuel: Divine Presence and God's People in the First Gospel*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 99. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Lachs, Samuel Tobias. *A Rabbinic Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke*. Hoboken, N.J.: Ktav, 1987.
- Lane, William Lister. *The Gospel According to Mark*. The New London Commentary on the New Testament. London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1974.
- Lang, Friedrich Gustav. "Kompositionsanalyse des Markusevangeliums." *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 74 (1977): 1–24.
- Larson, Kevin W. "The Structure of Mark's Gospel: Current Proposals." *Currents in Biblical Research* 3 (2004): 140–60.
- LaVerdiere, Eugene A. *The Eucharist in the New Testament and in the Early Church*. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1996.
- LaVerdiere, Eugene A. *The Beginning of the Gospel: Introducing the Gospel according to Mark*. 2 vols. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1999.

- Lee, David. *Cognitive Linguistics: An Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Lemcio, Eugene E. "External Evidence for the Structure and Function of Mark 4:1–20, 7:14–23 and 8:14–21." *Journal of Theological Studies* 29 (1978): 323–38.
- Leroux, N. R. "Repetition, Progression, and Persuasion in Scripture." *Neotestamentica* 29 (1995): 1–25.
- Levinsohn, Stephen H. "Participant Reference in Koine Greek Narrative." Pages 31–44 in *Linguistics and New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Discourse Analysis*. Edited by David Alan Black, Katharine Barnwell, and Stephen H. Levinsohn. Nashville: Broadman, 1992.
- Levinsohn, Stephen H. "Towards a Unified Linguistic Description of οὗτος and ἐκεῖνος." Paper presented in the Biblical Greek and Linguistics Section of the annual meeting of the SBL. Atlanta, 2003.
- Lightfoot, Robert Henry. *History and Interpretation in the Gospels*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1935.
- Lindars, Barnabas. "Elijah, Elisha, and the Gospel Miracles." Pages 63–79 in *Miracles: Cambridge Studies in Their Philosophy and History*. Edited by C. F. D. Moule. London: A. R. Mowbray, 1965.
- Lohmeyer, Ernst. *Das Evangelium des Markus*. 17th ed. Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament 1/2. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967.
- Louw, Johannes P., and Eugene A. Nida, eds. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*. 2 vols. New York: United Bible Societies, 1988.
- Low, Setha M., and Denise Lawrence-Zúñiga, eds. *Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.
- Lührmann, Dieter. *Das Markusevangelium*. Handbuch zum Neuen Testament 3. Tübingen: Mohr, 1987.
- MacKay, Ian. *John's Relationship With Mark: An Analysis of John 6 in the Light of Mark 6–8*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2/182. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004.
- Madden, Patrick J. *Jesus' Walking on the Sea: An Investigation of the Origin of the Narrative Account*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 81. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1997.
- Malbon, Elizabeth Struthers. "Mythic Structure and Meaning in Mark." *Semeia* 16 (1979): 97–132.

- Malbon, Elizabeth Struthers. "Fallible Followers: Women and Men in the Gospel of Mark." *Semeia* 28 (1983): 29–48.
- Malbon, Elizabeth Struthers. "The Jesus of Mark and the Sea of Galilee." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 103 (1984): 363–77.
- Malbon, Elizabeth Struthers. "Disciples/Crowds/Whoever: Markan Characters and Readers." *Novum Testamentum* 28 (1986): 104–30.
- Malbon, Elizabeth Struthers. "The Jewish Leaders in the Gospel of Mark: A Literary Study of Marcan Characterization." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108 (1989): 259–81.
- Malbon, Elizabeth Struthers. *Narrative Space and Mythic Meaning in Mark*. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991.
- Malbon, Elizabeth Struthers. "Narrative Criticism: How Does the Story Mean?" *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*. Edited by Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992.
- Malbon, Elizabeth Struthers. "Echoes and Foreshadowings in Mark 4–8: Reading and Rereading." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 112 (1993): 211–30.
- Malbon, Elizabeth Struthers. "Text and Contexts: Interpreting the Disciples in Mark." *Semeia* 62 (1993): 81–102.
- Malbon, Elizabeth Struthers. "The Major Importance of Minor Characters in Mark." Pages 58–86 in *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament*. Edited by Edgar V. McKnight and Elizabeth Struthers Malbon. Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1994.
- Malbon, Elizabeth Struthers. "Galilee and Jerusalem: History and Literature in Marcan Interpretation." Pages 253–68 in *The Interpretation of Mark*. 2d ed. Edited by William R. Telford. Studies in New Testament Interpretation. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995. Repr. from *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 44 (1982): 242–55.
- Malbon, Elizabeth Struthers. "The Beginning of a Narrative Commentary on the Gospel of Mark." Pages 98–122 in *SBL Seminary Papers*, 1996. Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers 35. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996.
- Malbon, Elizabeth Struthers. "The Christology of Mark's Gospel: Narrative Christology and the Markan Jesus." Pages 33–48 in *Who Do You Say That I Am?: Essays on Christology*. Edited by Mark Allan Powell and David R. Bauer. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster, 1999.
- Malbon, Elizabeth Struthers. *In the Company of Jesus: Characters in Mark's Gospel*. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2000.

- Malbon, Elizabeth Struthers. "Text and Contexts: Interpreting the Disciples in Mark." Pages 100–30 in *In the Company of Jesus: Characters in Mark's Gospel*. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2000.
- Malbon, Elizabeth Struthers. *Hearing Mark: A Listener's Guide*. Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2002.
- Malbon, Elizabeth Struthers. "Narrative Christology and the Son of Man: What the Markan Jesus Says Instead." *Biblical Interpretation* 11 (2003): 373–85.
- Malina, Bruce J. "Assessing the Historicity of Jesus' Walking on the Sea: Insights from Cross-Cultural Social Psychology." Pages 351–71 in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*. Edited by Bruce D. Chilton and Craig A. Evans. New Testament Tools and Studies 28.2. Leiden: Brill, 1999.
- Malina, Bruce J., and Richard L. Rohrbaugh. *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992.
- Maloney, Elliott C. *Semitic Interference in Marcan Syntax*. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 51. Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1981.
- Mánek, Jindřich. "Fishers of Men." *Novum Testamentum* 2 (1957): 138–41.
- Mánek, Jindřich. "Mark viii 14–21." *Novum Testamentum* 7 (1964): 1014.
- Mann, C. S. *Mark*. Anchor Bible 27. New York: Doubleday, 1986.
- Manson, T. W. "Mark viii.14–21." *Journal of Theological Studies* 30 (1928): 45–47.
- Marcus, Joel. "Mark 4:10–12 and Markan Epistemology." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 103 (1984): 557–74.
- Marcus, Joel. *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God*. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 90. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986.
- Marcus, Joel. *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark*. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1992.
- Marcus, Joel. "A Note on Markan Optics." *New Testament Studies* 45 (1999): 250–56.
- Marcus, Joel. *Mark 1–8*. Anchor Bible 27a. New York: Doubleday, 2000.
- Marshall, Christopher D. *Faith as a Theme in Mark's Narrative*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 64. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Matera, Frank J. *What Are They Saying about Mark?* New York: Paulist Press, 1987.
- Matera, Frank J. "The Incomprehension of the Disciples and Peter's Confession (Mark of 6,14–8,30)." *Biblica* 70 (1989): 153–72.

- McInerny, William F. "An Unresolved Question in the Gospel Called Mark: "Who Is This Whom Even Wind and Sea Obey?" (4:41)." *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 23 (1996): 255–68.
- McKnight, Edgar V. *The Bible and the Reader: An Introduction to Literary Criticism*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985.
- McKnight, Scot. "Gentiles." Pages 259–65 in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Edited by Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1992.
- Meier, John P. *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*. 3 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1991–2001.
- Metzger, Bruce M. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*. 2d. ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994.
- Meye, Robert P. *Jesus and the Twelve: Discipleship and Redaction in Mark's Gospel*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968.
- Meye, Robert P. "Psalm 107 as 'Horizon' for Interpreting the Miracle Stories of Mark 4:35–8:26." Pages 1–13 in *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology: Essays in Honor of George E. Ladd*. Edited by Robert A. Guelich. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978.
- Meyer, A. "Die Entstehung des Markusevangeliums." Pages 35–60 in *Festgabe für Adolf Jülicher zum 70. Geburtstag*. Tübingen: Mohr, 1927.
- Miller, Susan. *Women in Mark's Gospel*. Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series 259. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002.
- Minsky, Marvin. "A Framework for Representing Knowledge." Pages 211–77 in *The Psychology of Computer Vision*. Edited by Patrick Henry Winston. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975.
- Mitton, Charles Leslie. "New Wine in Old Wine Skins: IV. Leaven." *Expository Times* 84 (1972–73): 339–43.
- Moloney, Francis J. "Mark 6:6b–30: Mission, the Baptist, and Failure." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 63 (2001): 647–63.
- Moloney, Francis J. *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002.
- Moloney, Francis J. *Mark: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2004.
- Moore, Stephen D. *Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989.

- Murphy, Catherine M. "Glossary." No pages. Cited 16 May 2006. Online: <http://www-relg-studies.scu.edu/facstaff/murphy/courses/sctr102/glossary.htm>.
- Myers, Ched. *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*. Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis, 1988.
- Neirynck, Frans. *Duality in Mark: Contributions to the Study of the Markan Redaction*. Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium 31. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1972.
- Neirynck, Frans. "Jesus and the Sabbath. Some Observations on Mark II:27." Pages 227–70 in *Jésus aux Origines de la Christologie*. Edited by J. Dupont. Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium 40. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1975.
- Neyrey, Jerome H. "The Idea of Purity in Mark's Gospel." *Semeia* 35 (1986): 91–128.
- Nineham, D. E. *The Gospel of St. Mark*. Pelican Gospel Commentaries. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1963.
- O'Grady, John F. "The Passion in Mark." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 10 (1980): 83–87.
- Ong, Walter J. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. 2d ed. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Painter, John. *Mark's Gospel: Worlds in Conflict*. New Testament Readings. London: Routledge, 1997.
- Parrott, Rod. "Conflict and Rhetoric in Mark 2:23–28." *Semeia* 64 (1993): 117–37.
- Patai, Raphael. *The Children of Noah: Jewish Seafaring in Ancient Times*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.
- Peabody, David Barrett. *Mark as Composer*. New Gospel Studies 1. Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1987.
- Peace, Richard V. *Conversion in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
- Perrin, Norman. "The Christology of Mark: A Study in Methodology." *Journal of Religion* (1971): 173–87.
- Perrin, Norman. "The Christology of Mark: A Study in Methodology." Pages 104–21 in *A Modern Pilgrimage in New Testament Christology*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974.
- Perrin, Norman. "Towards an Interpretation of the Gospel of Mark." Pages 1–52 in *Christology and a Modern Pilgrimage: A Discussion with Norman Perrin*. Rev. ed. Edited by Hans Dieter Betz. Missoula, Mo.: Scholars Press, 1974.

- Perrin, Norman. "The Interpretation of the Gospel of Mark." *Interpretation* 30 (1976): 115–24.
- Perry, Menakhem. "Literary Dynamics: How the Order of a Text Creates Its Meanings." *Poetics Today* 1 (1979): 35–64, 311–61.
- Persson, Lennart. "The Gentile Mission in the Markan Interpolation (Mark 7:1–8:26)." *Bangalore Theological Forum* 12 (1980): 44–49.
- Pervo, Richard I. "Panta Koina: The Feeding Stories in the Light of Economic Data and Social Practice." Pages 163–94 in *Religious Propaganda and Missionary Competition in the New Testament World: Essays Honoring Dieter Georgi*. Edited by Lukas Bormann, Kelly Del Tredici, and Angela Standhartinger. Novum Testamentum Supplements 74. Leiden: Brill, 1994.
- Pesch, Rudolf. *Naherwartungen: Tradition und Redaktion in Mk. 13*. Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1968.
- Pesch, Rudolf. "The Markan Version of the Healing of the Gerasene Demoniac." *Ecumenical Review* 23 (1971): 349–76.
- Pesch, Rudolf. *Das Markusevangelium*. 2 vols. Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 2. Freiburg: Herder, 1976–1977.
- Petersen, Norman R. *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics*. Guides to Biblical Scholarship. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978.
- Petersen, Norman R. "'Point of View' in Mark's Narrative." *Semeia* 12 (1978): 97–121.
- Petersen, Norman R. "The Composition of Mark 4:1–8:26." *Harvard Theological Review* 73 (1980): 185–217.
- Petersen, Norman R. "The Reader in the Gospel." *Neotestamentica* 18 (1984): 38–51.
- Petersen, Norman R. "'Literarkritik', The New Literary Criticism and the Gospel according to Mark." Pages 935–48 in *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck*. Edited by F. van Segbroeck. Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium 100. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992.
- Peterson, Dwight N., ed. *The Origins of Mark: The Markan Community in Current Debate*. Biblical Interpretation Series 48. Leiden: Brill, 2000.
- Petruck, Miriam R. L. "Frame Semantics." *Handbook of Pragmatics*. Edited by Jef Verschueren, Jan-Ola Östman, Jan Blommaert, and Chris Bulcaen. Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1996.
- Philo*. Translated by F. H. Colson, G. H. Whitaker, and Ralph Marcus. 12 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1929–1962.

- Pliny. Translated by H. Rackham, W. H. S. Jones, and D. E. Eichholz. 10 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1938–1963.
- Porter, Stanley E. *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*. Biblical Languages: Greek 2. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992.
- Porter, Stanley E. “Linguistics and Rhetorical Criticism.” Pages 63–92 in *Linguistics and the New Testament: Critical Junctures*. Edited by Stanley E. Porter and D. A. Carson. Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series 168; Studies in New Testament Greek 5. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.
- Porter, Stanley E., and Andrew W. Pitts. “New Testament Greek Language and Linguistics in Recent Research.” *Currents in Biblical Research* 6 (2008): 214–55.
- Powell, Mark Allan. *What Is Narrative Criticism?* Guides to Biblical Scholarship. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990.
- Powell, Mark Allan. *Chasing the Eastern Star: Adventures in Biblical Reader-Response Criticism*. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1991.
- Powell, Mark Allan. “Toward a Narrative Critical Understanding of Mark.” *Interpretation* 47 (1993): 341–46.
- Powell, Mark Allan. *What Is Narrative Criticism?: A New Approach to the Bible*. London: SPCK, 1993.
- Powell, Mark Allan. “Narrative Criticism.” Pages 239–55 in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*. Joel B. Green. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.
- Powell, Mark Allan. “Characterization on the Phraseological Plane in the Gospel of Matthew.” Pages 161–77 in *Treasures Old and New: Recent Contributions to Matthean Studies*. Edited by David R. Bauer and Mark Allan Powell. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996.
- Prince, Gerald. *Narrative as Theme: Studies in French Fiction*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992.
- Pryke, E. J. *Redactional Style in the Marcan Gospel: A Study of Syntax and Vocabulary as Guides to Redaction in Mark*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.
- Purcell, Nicholas. “Eating Fish: The Paradoxes of Seafood.” Pages 132–49 in *Food in Antiquity*. Edited by John Wilkins, David Harvey, and Mike Dobson. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995.
- Quesnell, Quentin. *The Mind of Mark: Interpretation and Method through the Exegesis of Mark 6,52*. Analecta biblica 38. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969.



- Rabinowitz, Peter J. "Truth in Fiction: A Reexamination of Audiences." *Critical Inquiry* 4 (1977): 121–41.
- Räsänen, Heikki. "Jesus and Food Laws: Reflections on Mark 7.15." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 16 (1982): 79–100.
- Rapinchuk, Mark. "The Galilee and Jesus in Recent Research." *Currents in Biblical Research* 2 (2004): 197–222.
- Rau, Gottfried. "Das Markusevangelium: Komposition und Intention der ersten Darstellung christlicher Mission." *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung* II.25.3 (1985): 2036–257.
- Reed, Jonathan L. *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus: A Re-examination of the Evidence*. Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2000.
- Reed, Stephen A. "Bread." Pages 777–80 in vol. 1 of *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Reese, David George. "Demons, New Testament." Pages 140–42 in vol. 2 of *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Resseguie, James L. *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005.
- Rhoads, David. "Social Criticism: Crossing Boundaries." Pages 135–61 in *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*. Edited by Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992.
- Rhoads, David. "Losing Life for Others in the Face of Death: Mark's Standards of Judgment." *Interpretation* 47 (1993): 358–69.
- Rhoads, David. *Reading Mark, Engaging the Gospel*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004.
- Rhoads, David, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie. *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*. 2d ed. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999.
- Rhoads, David M. "Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 50 (1982): 411–34.
- Rhoads, David M. "Jesus and the Syrophenician Woman in Mark: A Narrative-Critical Study." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 62 (1994): 343–75.
- Richardson, Alan. *The Miracle-Stories of the Gospels*. London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1941.

- Riesenfeld, Harald. *The Gospel Tradition*. Translated by E. Margaret Rowley and Robert A. Kraft. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970.
- Robbins, Vernon K. "Summons and Outline in Mark: The Three-Step Progression." *Novum Testamentum* 23 (1981): 97–114.
- Robbins, Vernon K. *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984.
- Robbins, Vernon K. *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation*. Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1996.
- Robbins, Vernon K. *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Robertson, A. T. *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*. Nashville: Broadman, 1934.
- Robinson, James M. *The Problem of History in Mark*. London: SCM Press, 1957.
- Roskam, H. N. *The Purpose of the Gospel of Mark in its Historical and Social Context*. Supplements to Novum Testamentum 114. Leiden: Brill, 2004.
- Rousseau, John J. "The Impact of the Bethsaida Finds on Our Knowledge of the Historical Jesus." Pages 187–207 in *SBL Seminar Papers*, 1995. Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers 34. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995.
- Rousseau, John J., and Rami Arav. *Jesus and His World: An Archaeological and Cultural Dictionary*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995.
- Runge, Steven. [srunge@logos.com] "[B-Greek] Mark 8:4, TOUTOUS. In B-GREEK." [b-greek@lists.ibiblio.org]. 12 July 2007.
- Schenke, Ludger. *Das Markusevangelium*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1988.
- Schreiber, Johannes. "Die Christologie des Markusevangeliums." *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 58 (1961): 154–83.
- Schreiber, Johannes. *Theologie des Vertrauens: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung des Markusevangeliums*. Hamburg: Furche-Verlag, 1967.
- Schweizer, Eduard. *The Good News according to Mark*. Translated by Donald H. Madvig. Richmond, Va.: John Knox, 1970.
- Schweizer, Eduard. "The Portrayal of the Life of Faith in the Gospel of Mark." *Interpretation* 32 (1978): 387–99.

- Schweizer, Eduard. "Mark's Theological Achievement." Pages 42–63 in *The Interpretation of Mark*. Edited by William R. Telford. Issues in Religion and Theology 7. 1985. Repr. from *Evangelische Theologie* 24 (1964): 337–55.
- Scott, M. Philip. "Chiastic Structure: A Key to the Interpretation of Mark's Gospel." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 15 (1985): 17–26.
- Sellew, Philip. "Composition of Didactic Scenes in Mark's Gospel." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108 (1989): 613–34.
- Shiner, Whitney Taylor. *Follow Me! Disciples in Markan Rhetoric*. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 145. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995.
- Smith, Dennis E. "Greco-Roman Meal Customs." Pages 650–53 in vol. 4 of *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Smith, Dennis E. "Greco-Roman Sacred Meals." Pages 653–55 in vol. 4 of *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Smith, Stephen H. "Bethsaida via Gennesaret: The Enigma of the Sea-Crossing in Mark 6,45–53." *Biblica* 77 (1996): 349–74.
- Smith, Stephen H. *A Lion with Wings: A Narrative-Critical Approach to Mark's Gospel*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.
- Snoy, Thierry. "La rédaction marcienne de la marche sur les eaux (Mc, VI, 45–52)." *Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses* 44 (1968): 205–41, 433–81.
- Stegner, William Richard. *Narrative Theology in Early Jewish Christianity*. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster, 1989.
- Stein, Siegfried. "The Influence of Symposia Literature on the Literary Form of the Pesah Haggadah." *Journal of Jewish Studies* 7 (1957): 13–44.
- Sternberg, Meir. *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.
- Stettler, Christian. "'Purity of Heart in Jesus' Teaching: Mark 7:14–23 Par. as an Expression of Jesus' Basileia Ethics." *Journal of Theological Studies* 55 (2004): 467–502.
- Stibbe, Mark W. G. *John as Storyteller: Narrative Criticism and the Fourth Gospel*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 73. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Stock, Augustine. *Call to Discipleship: A Literary Study of Mark's Gospel*. Good News Studies 1. Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1982.

- Stock, Augustine. "Hinge Transitions in Mark's Gospel." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 15 (1985): 27–31.
- Stock, Augustine. *The Method and Message of Mark*. Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1989.
- Strabo. Translated by Horace L. Jones. 8 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1917–1932.
- Strange, James F. "Dalmanutha." Page 4 in vol. 2 of *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Strickert, Fred. *Bethsaida: Home of the Apostles*. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1998.
- Sugirtharajah, Rasiah S. "The Syrophoenician Woman." *Expository Times* 98 (1986): 13–15.
- Svartvik, Jesper. *Mark and Mission: Mk 7:1–23 in its Narrative and Historical Contexts*. Coniectanea biblica: New Testament Series 32. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2000.
- Swanson, Donald C. "Diminutives in the Greek New Testament." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 77 (1958): 134–51.
- Swanson, Reuben J., ed. *New Testament Greek Manuscripts: Mark*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995.
- Swartley, Willard M. "A Study in Markan Structure: The Influence of Israel's Holy History Upon the Structure of the Gospel of Mark." Ph.D. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1973.
- Swartley, Willard M. "The Structural Function of the Term 'Way' (Hodos) in Mark's Gospel." Pages 73–86 in *The New Way of Jesus: Essays Presented to Howard Charles*. Edited by William Klassen. Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1980.
- Swartley, Willard M. *Mark: The Way for All Nations*. 2d ed. Scottdale, Penn.: Herald, 1981.
- Swartley, Willard M. *Israel's Scripture Traditions and the Synoptic Gospels: Story Shaping Story*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994.
- Swete, Henry Barclay. *The Gospel according to St Mark*. London: Macmillan, 1909.
- Tagawa, Kenzo. *Miracles et Evangile*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966.
- Tannehill, Robert C. *The Sword of His Mouth*. Semeia Supplements 1. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975.

- Tannehill, Robert C. "The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role." *Journal of Religion* (1977): 386–405.
- Tannehill, Robert C. *A Mirror for Disciples: A Study of the Gospel of Mark*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1977.
- Tannehill, Robert C. "The Gospel of Mark as Narrative Christology." *Semeia* 16 (1979): 57–95.
- Taylor, Vincent. *The Gospel according to St. Mark*. London: Macmillan, 1952, 1963.
- Telford, William R., ed. *The Interpretation of Mark*. 2d ed. Studies in New Testament Interpretation. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995.
- Telford, William R. *Mark*. New Testament Guides. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995.
- Telford, William R. *The Theology of the Gospel of Mark*. New Testament Theology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Theissen, Gerd. *The Miracle Stories of Early Christian Tradition*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1983.
- Theissen, Gerd. "„Meer’ und ‚See’ in den Evangelien: Ein Betrag zur Lokalkoloritforschung." *Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt* 10 (1985): 5–25.
- Theissen, Gerd. *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition*. Translated by Linda M. Maloney. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991.
- Thompson, John Arthur. *The Book of Jeremiah*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980.
- Tolbert, Mary Ann. *Sowing the Gospel: Mark's World in Literary-Historical Perspective*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989.
- Tolbert, Mary Ann. "How the Gospel of Mark Builds Character." *Interpretation* 47 (1993): 347–57.
- Trocmé, Étienne. *The Formation of the Gospel according to Mark*. Translated by Pamela Gaughan. London: SPCK, 1975.
- Tuckett, Christopher M. "Introduction: The Problem of the Messianic Secret." Pages 1–28 in *The Messianic Secret*. Edited by Christopher M. Tuckett. Issues in Religion and Theology 1. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983.
- Twelftree, Graham H. "Demon, Devil, Satan." Pages 163–72 in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Edited by Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1992.

- Tyson, Joseph B. "The Blindness of the Disciples in Mark." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 80 (1961): 261–68.
- Uspensky, Boris. *A Poetics of Composition: The Structure of the Artistic Text and Typology of a Compositional Form*. Translated by Valentina Zavarin and Susan Wittig. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973.
- van Iersel, Bas M. F. "Locality, Structure and Meaning in Mark." *Linguistica Biblica* 53 (1983): 45–54.
- van Iersel, Bas M. F. "He Will Baptize You with Holy Spirit (Mark 1,8): The Time Perspective of βαπτίσει." Pages 132–41 in *Text and Testament: Essays on New Testament and Apocryphal Literature in Honour of A. F. J. Klijn*. Edited by T. Baarda. Kampen: Kok, 1988.
- van Iersel, Bas M. F. *Reading Mark*. Translated by W. H. Bisscheroux. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989.
- van Iersel, Bas M. F. "KAI HΘΕΛΕΝ ΠΑΡΕΛΘΕΙΝ ΑΥΤΟΥΣ: Another Look at Mark 6,48d." Pages 1065–76 in *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck*. Edited by F. van Segbroeck. Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium 100. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992.
- van Iersel, Bas M. F. *Mark: A Reader-Response Commentary*. Translated by W. H. Bisscheroux. Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series 164. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998.
- Wachsmann, Shelley. *The Sea of Galilee Boat: A 2000-Year-Old Discovery from the Sea of Legends*. Cambridge, Mass.: Perseus, 2000.
- Wallace, Daniel B. *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.
- Watson, A. *Jesus and the Law*. Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1996.
- Watts, Rikki E. *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1997.
- Weeden, Theodore J. "The Heresy That Necessitated Mark's Gospel." *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 59 (1968): 145–58.
- Weeden, Theodore J. *Mark — Traditions in Conflict*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971.
- Weeden, Theodore J. "The Heresy That Necessitated Mark's Gospel." Pages 64–77 in *The Interpretation of Mark*. Edited by William R. Telford. Issues in Religion and Theology 7. 1985. *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 59 (1968).

- Wefald, Eric K. "The Separate Gentile Mission in Mark: A Narrative Explanation of Markan Geography, the Two Feeding Accounts and Exorcisms." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 60 (1995): 3–26.
- Wilkins, John. "Fish as a Source of Food in Antiquity." Pages 21–30 in *Ancient Fishing and Fish Processing in the Black Sea Region*. Edited by Tønnes Bekker-Nielsen. Black Sea Studies 2. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2005.
- Wilkins, John M., and Shaun Hill. *Food in the Ancient World*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2006.
- Williams, Joel F. *Other Followers of Jesus: Minor Characters as Major Figures in Mark's Gospel*. *Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series* 102. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994.
- Williams, Joel F. "Does Mark's Gospel Have an Outline?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49 (2006): 505–25.
- Witherington III, Ben. *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Wrede, William. *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien: zugleich ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Markusevangeliums*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901.
- Wuellner, Wilhelm H. "Early Christian Traditions about the Fishers of Men." *Hartford Quarterly* 54 (1965): 50–60.
- Wuellner, Wilhelm H. *The Meaning of "Fishers of Men"*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967.
- Young, George W. *Subversive Symmetry: Exploring the Fantastic in Mark 6:45–56*. *Biblical Interpretation Series* 41. Leiden: Brill, 1999.





## APPENDIX A

# VALENCE DESCRIPTION FUNCTIONS

The following tables summarize the designations and definitions for syntactic and semantic functions, lexical realizations, and the conventions for indicating permissible complement omission and coinstantiation.<sup>1</sup> Very few of these functions have been referenced in this study but have been provided here for the sake of completeness.

### SYNTACTIC FUNCTIONS

<b>1</b>	subject complement of a predicator
<b>2</b>	complement that instantiates the second (required) argument of a predicator
<b>3</b>	complement that instantiates the third (required) argument of a predicator
<b>C</b>	complement that instantiates a (non-required) augment of a predicator

### SEMANTIC FUNCTIONS

<b>Agt</b>	Agent	the entity that actively instigates an action and/or is the ultimate cause of a change in another entity
<b>Ben</b>	Benefactive	the ultimate entity for which an action is performed or for which, literally or figuratively, something happens or exists
<b>Cau</b>	Cause	the circumstantial motivation for an action or event
<b>Cmp</b>	Comparative	the entity or event compared to another entity or event
<b>Com</b>	Comitative	the entity specified as associated with an Agent, Patient, or Benefactive
<b>Cnd</b>	Conditional	the entity or event required for another event to occur
<b>Con</b>	Content	the content of a mental or psychological state, event, or activity
<b>Cur</b>	Current	the present state of an entity
<b>Eve</b>	Event	the complete circumstantial scene of an action or event
<b>Exp</b>	Experiencer	the animate being that is the locus of a mental or psychological state, event, or activity
<b>Goa</b>	Goal	the literal or figurative entity towards which something moves
<b>Ins</b>	Instrument	the means by which an action is performed or something happens
<b>Loc</b>	Locative	the literal or figurative place in which an entity is situated or an event occurs
<b>Man</b>	Manner	the circumstantial qualification of an action or event
<b>Mea</b>	Measure	the quantification of an action or event or price of an entity
<b>Pat</b>	Patient	the entity (1) undergoing an action or (2) located in a place or moving from one place to another

<sup>1</sup> This table has been adapted from Paul L. Danove, *Linguistics and Exegesis in the Gospel of Mark: Applications of a Case Frame Analysis and Lexicon* (JSNTSup 218; SNTG 10; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 237–239.

<b>Prt</b>	Partitive	the complete entity, group, or concept from which an element is extracted
<b>Pth</b>	Path	the literal or figurative locale that entails the transition in motion
<b>Res</b>	Result	the consequence of a complete event
<b>Rst</b>	Resultant	the final state of an entity undergoing change
<b>Sou</b>	Source	the literal or figurative entity from which something moves
<b>Sti</b>	Stimulus	the event or entity that brings about a change in a mental or psychological state, event, or activity
<b>Tem</b>	Temporal	the time, either durative or punctual, of an action or event
<b>Top</b>	Topic	the topic of focus of a mental or psychological state, event, or activity
<b>T+C</b>	Topic + Comment	the complex construct of a Topic and a comment offering further specification of the Topic
<b>Voc</b>	Vocative	the directly addressed entity

### LEXICAL FUNCTIONS

<b>N</b>	Noun Phrase
<b>Adj</b>	Adjective
<b>V</b>	Verb Phrase
<b>P</b>	Prepositional Phrase
<b>A</b>	Adverb

Each of these general designations may receive further specification for a given verb:

<b>N+</b>	Maximal Noun Phrase	(to which syntactic case information may be attached)
<b>Adj+</b>	Maximal Adjectival Phrase	(to which syntactic case information may be attached)
<b>V+</b>	Maximal Verb Phrase	(to which distinguishing characteristics may be attached)
<b>V-</b>	Minimal Verb Phrase	(to which distinguishing characteristics are attached)
<b>P/</b>	Prepositional Phrase	(to which the governing preposition is attached)
<b>A/</b>	Adverb	(to which the precise adverb is attached)

### Specifications of Null Complements

<b>[ ]</b>	Definite Null Complement	(placed around the appropriate syntactic function)
<b>DNC</b>	Definite Null Complement	(lexical realization specification)
<b>( )</b>	Indefinite Null Complement	(placed around the appropriate syntactic function)
<b>INC</b>	Indefinite Null Complement	(lexical realization specification)
<b>(gns)</b>	Generic Null Subject	(attached to V+i)
<b>1, 2, 3</b>	Coinstantiation Indices	(for first and second complement, attached to V-i)





## APPENDIX B

# ASSOCIATIONAL CLUSTERS

The tables on the following pages represent the “Database of Candidates” and the “Associational Cluster” for the Sea Crossing and The Loaves motifs.

### NOTES

1. The multiplication sign “×” represents each occurrence of a given word and is located in the column corresponding to the episode in which it occurs; a cell with multiple ×’s indicates that a given word occurs that number of times within the same episode.
2. Statistical data is provided alongside the lexemes on the vertical axis.
  - a. The first number indicates the total number of occurrences of a given word in Mark (as in the Database of Candidates) or the number of occurrences in the associational cluster (as in the Associational Cluster).
  - b. The second number indicates the number of episodes in which a word occurs, either in Mark or a given motif.

For example, in “The Loaves Motif — Database of Candidates,” the statistical information reveals that ἐσθίω occurs a total of 27 times in Mark within 12 different episodes.



[illegible]

**Table 1a: The Sea Crossing Motif — Database of Candidates**





[illegible]







[illegible]