



THE MISSION STATEMENT OF JESUS (MARK 1:15)

Mark's Apocalyptically Charged Decision Motif

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the mission statement of Jesus in Mark 1:15: 'The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the gospel'. The statement will be examined from the perspective of the writer, Mark, who - it will be argued - crafted the statement as a rhetorical device to press his audience for a personal decision to accept Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God and as a call for them to be baptized. It will be argued that the mission statement was fully crafted by Mark rather than originating with the historical Jesus. The analysis examines the apocalyptic imagery that the writer invokes, and how he uses that imagery to charge a decision motif with tension and a call to action, prior to what was expected to be the imminent Parousia of Jesus. The statement in Mark 1:15 is examined from a textual, literary, and historical perspective, considering Mark's literary style from a narrative perspective, his rhetorical goals, and the eschatological and apocalyptic expectations that were operating in the background at the time of the Gospel's composition. Mark's use of apocalyptic imagery for rhetorical purposes will be shown to be the product of his circumstances and of those experienced by his community during the first Jewish-Roman War. These circumstances led him to believe that the end of the age had come and that certain prophetic traditions regarding the 'Day of the Lord' were being fulfilled. This therefore led Mark to frame the mission statement as an imperative for early Christian believers to decide to commit themselves fully, through the act of baptism, to suffering discipleship and imminent death in the final moments before the return of Jesus.

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Chapter 1

General Introduction

The Gospel of Mark begins with the author telling his readers that Jesus came proclaiming the kingdom of God (1:14) and that Jesus had something very specific to say about his upcoming ministry in Galilee (1:15). In his presentation of Jesus' mission statement, the author gives the impression that he is using Jesus' exact, originally spoken words from over three decades before the Gospel of Mark was written. Commentators over the years, writing about the Gospel of Mark, have tended to treat the statement as a mix of 'authentic' remembrances of Jesus, on the one hand, and as the views of the early Church, on the other. Few, however, have considered the possibility that the entire mission statement is the invention of the author, constructed for his own literary or rhetorical purposes, using the Jewish Scriptures and existing Christian traditions as key resources to construct the statement.

This dissertation will consider that possibility, as well as the reasons why the author may have done this. The purpose of this study is to examine whether the author, who will be referred to as Mark, constructed the mission statement of Jesus for a rhetorical purpose, namely, to warn his audience of the apocalyptic times they were living in and to strengthen them for what was about to happen at the eschaton. I will argue that Mark constructed the mission statement of Jesus (1:15) as part of a decision motif, using the Jewish Scriptures in particular, to bring his readers to Christian baptism and committed discipleship in preparation for the Parousia of Jesus, that he regarded as imminent.

The dissertation will comprise of five chapters and a conclusion. Each chapter will begin with an introduction. In Chapter 1, the research question will be articulated, as summarized above, followed in Chapter 2 by an analysis of Mark's use of material from the Jewish Scriptures, particularly - I will propose - from Ezekiel and Daniel, to provide a rhetorical framework for the mission statement in Mark 1:15. It will be argued that Mark constructed the mission statement using Ezekiel's imagery of Israel's doom on the Day of the Lord (Ezek. 7:7) and conflated that

imagery with an allusion to Daniel's 'one like a son of man' (Dan. 7:13) to support his theological and rhetorical goals.

In Chapter 3 the text of the mission statement will be examined in detail, with each word and phrase evaluated for their possible meaning, application and context within the Gospel of Mark. This part of the analysis will form the basis of the investigation as conducted in the rest of the dissertation. Careful attention will be paid to the vocabulary attested in the mission statement of the Markan Jesus, given that the Greek words and phrases in question will have either been translated from a source and interpreted or perhaps, as will be fully examined, wholly constructed by Mark to establish his rhetorical purpose.¹ I will consider whether some of the phrasing used by the writer may plausibly represent a cultural memory of Jesus' original teaching² on the subject of his Galilean ministry, one that perhaps resonated in his sources or in his community, while other phrases in the statement may reflect certain early Christian traditions, such as baptismal traditions, that developed after the death of Jesus. In the third chapter, I will also evaluate the strong possibility that the statement has, mostly, a post-Easter meaning and significance.³

Although I will consider whether the mission statement contains a cultural memory of the teachings of the historical Jesus, the analysis underpinning this dissertation will not draw upon

¹ E.S. Malbon, *Mark's Jesus* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009), 252, points out that narrative critics have frequently claimed that the Markan narrator and the Markan Jesus share the same point of view, but she does establish some distinctions between the narrator and the character of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark.

² A. Le Donne, 'The Criterion of Coherence: Its Development, Inevitability, and Historiographical Limitations', in C. Keith and A. Le Donne (eds.), *Jesus, Criteria and the Demise of Authenticity* (New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 95-96, explains that what biblical studies describe as an oral Jesus tradition is really a cultural memory that is reshaped with each new social framework that it inhabits. Le Donne notes that human memory is always in flux and never represents the pure, unaltered or uninterpreted past. His views, and those of others who advocate a memory approach, have had a significant influence on the line of argument developed in this dissertation.

³ A. Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, Hermeneia Commentaries (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 1, notes that: 'The growing recognition of the independence and intentionality of the author, combined with the acceptance of Mark as the oldest Gospel, led to the insight that he was the first to attempt a narrative account of the events associated with the post-Easter proclamation of the followers of Jesus...'

specific authenticity criteria⁴ to determine what the historical Jesus may or may not have said during his ministry. It will rather assume that, although Jesus can be considered an historical figure who said things of note that led to the early emergence of a movement in his name, it is not possible to discover *exactly* what he may have said from the available primary sources. I recognize that scholars are wholly dependent on the New Testament writings in the search for evidence of authenticity, and these in turn are the work of those who revered Jesus and wrote about him many years after his death. Therefore, nothing attributed to Jesus in the Gospel of Mark will be confidently asserted here as authentic or historically accurate insofar as it can be traced back to Jesus. All references to pronouncements made by Jesus will be considered as statements made by Mark about Jesus, interpreted through the author's lens, and shaped accordingly for his narrative presentation.

In Chapter 4, the author's rhetorical purpose will be considered, including his employment of a decision motif as a literary device. The first eight chapters of the Gospel of Mark will be shown to constitute a literary unit in which the author inserts short thematic summaries announcing Jesus' teachings on discipleship (1:14-20; 3:7-19; 6:6-13; 8:29-38). These summaries will be shown to be the design of the author, to elicit a response from readers to become or perhaps remain committed disciples of Jesus through the act of Christian baptism. Thus, from Mark's point of view, the mission statement is the first of several such summaries that - as will be demonstrated - he has written for a specifically Christian purpose.

In Chapter 5, I will consider Mark's apocalyptic themes and the imperative of the decision motif as a function of the apocalyptic setting and 'times' in which the author and his audience believed they were living in. This part of the dissertation will consider how the author used the Jewish

⁴ The authenticity criteria used by Jesus scholars, including source, literary, narratological, form, language and redaction analysis, typically involving the use of certain rules or tools, have been brought into question in recent scholarship, particularly regarding their ability to uncover historically authentic content in the New Testament gospels. These tools include the criteria of embarrassment, multiple attestation, dissimilarity, and other methods. Though these tools can be useful in the determination of plausibility or likelihood, they cannot with certainty determine what is authentic or historical. The assessment of authenticity is a question of source material, and all the NT gospels are second-hand and written by members of the movement, and not necessarily by eyewitnesses of the words and events that they record.

Scriptures to allude to Jesus as the Son of man, to complete his decision motif, by associating the Parousia with the coming of the kingdom of God. The allusions are prominent in the eighth and thirteenth chapters of Mark's narrative, which will be shown to connect to the mission statement (Mk 1:15) and Ezekiel's doom to charge it with apocalyptic tension and a call to action. In this chapter of the dissertation, I will propose that the imperative for the mission statement is in part a reflection of the circumstances at the time of the writing of Mark. The first Jewish-Roman war provided the backdrop and perhaps the impetus for Mark to construct the mission statement the way that he did, connecting Jewish prophecy regarding the Day of the Lord and the coming of the Son of man on the clouds to the Roman siege of Jerusalem, the destruction of the Temple and the expected return of Jesus in Mark's own time.

For ease of presentation, I will refer to the sequence of phrases in Mark 1:15 as 'the mission statement' of Jesus. I will refer to various New Testament sources, including Mark's Gospel, as *early Christian sources* and to the writers of the New Testament as *early Christian writers*, in order to distinguish them from trends and expectations among late Second Temple Jews and beyond. Furthermore, the post-Easter Jesus movement will be described as the *early Church*,⁵ acknowledging that some of these terms are broad and arguably anachronistic in a Markan setting. I will therefore use the word *Christian* to mean that which is in accordance with the beliefs and practices of the early Church, namely from the time after Jesus' death when he began to be venerated (c. 33-38 CE) to the time of the writing of Mark (c. 70 CE), which encompasses over thirty years of development. I will refer to *Christian baptism* as a traditional rite that was enacted by the early Church, before Mark's time, following the deaths of John the Baptist and Jesus. On occasion reference will be made to Jesus as *the Markan Jesus*, to reflect words and deeds attributed to Jesus that are likely to be of Mark's own construction. Furthermore, I will refer to Mark's audience as *readers* without excluding the probability that they were primarily *hearers*. The original readers in this respect were likely to have been culturally diverse, of Jewish and Gentile origin, and possibly made up of both Christians and non-Christians (to whom a

⁵ Malbon, *Mark's Jesus*, 253. She subdivides tradition, in form-critical terms, into early Church tradition and the historical Jesus.

particular appeal may be made).⁶ I will refer to *Mark's community* as the early Christian group with which the author identified and interacted, that is, those with whom he shared a particular cultural affinity, with its own special organization, activities, beliefs, and traditions.⁷ I will not assign Mark's community to any particular geographical location in this dissertation, as attempts to do so are largely speculative but also inconsequential to my thesis.

I will, moreover, discuss two main classifications of religious expectation in the late Second Temple and early Christian periods. The first classification will be described as *Jewish eschatological expectation*, and the second as *Christian apocalyptic expectation*. Jewish eschatological expectation denotes YHWH's economy for Israel in terms of his goals and purposes to punish the sins of his people and then bless them for repentance and obedience. Jewish eschatological expectation incorporates, in this respect, the Deuteronomistic principle of Israel's transgression, which will end only when Israel has fully repented of their sins against YHWH, and, as a result, will experience restoration and renewal, if not autonomy and independence from foreign rule and oppression.⁸ Jewish eschatological expectation also includes the belief that the Messiah will be involved in Israel's future by bringing about restoration and Israel's autonomy in the region, which will be revealed at the moment of YHWH's choosing through the Messiah.

⁶ With regard to the profile of Mark's audience, see F.J. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 1-23; J. Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, Anchor Bible 27 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 25-37; C.C. Black, *Mark*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011), 27-38; M.D. Hooker, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, Black's New Testament Commentaries (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 1-15; Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 96-102.

⁷ W.F. Telford, *The Theology of the Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 15.

⁸ C.E. Hayes, *Introduction to the Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 232, 233, 295, explains that the Deuteronomist was responding to the first major historical challenge to confront Israel and the Hebrew religion: the collapse of the Israelite nation, the destruction of Yahweh's sanctuary and the defeat and exile of Yahweh's people. She notes that the calamities of 722 BCE (Assyrian crisis) and 586 BCE (Babylonian crisis) created a theological dilemma of how the nation could fall to foreign nations and the people into captivity after Yahweh had promised Israel the land and David a perpetual kingdom. Thus, in the Deuteronomistic history, the nation is depicted as having the choice to accept the terms of Yahweh's covenant with Moses and prosper or reject it and face punishment and chastisement as a nation. This responsibility resided mostly with the monarchy. Hayes concludes that the Deuteronomist placed the blame for Israel's defeat during the Assyrian crisis on Jeroboam's idolatry (2 Kgs 17:16) and Judah's defeat during the Babylonian crisis on Manasseh's defilements of the Jerusalem Temple (2 Kgs 22). A later work of the Deuteronomistic school offers reconciliation in the book of Jeremiah (29:10, 11; 30:11; 31:7-14; 33:20, 21, 25, 26). Here, the prophet Jeremiah predicts an end to the Babylonian captivity, the end of domination of foreign nations of Israel, and the return of the exiles to their homeland. Jeremiah refers to a new Davidic king who will reign, under a new covenant, with Yahweh, who's laws will be etched on the hearts of the people.

Under this definition, Jewish eschatological expectation refers specifically to Israel's *earthly* domain and to the efforts of YHWH to return his people to autonomy and piety under the control of his chosen representative, the Messiah *on earth*. This expectation includes the scriptural concept of the Day of the Lord, which refers to a day of judgment and vengeance on Israel for its many sins. This includes the gathering of the remnant of Israel as a function of punishment for those who reject YHWH's instruction and restoration for those who accept it.

Christian apocalyptic expectation will be narrowly defined in this dissertation as the unique expectation that developed after Jesus' death, interpreted through what early Christian believers regarded as the fulfillment of various apocalyptic events that would accompany the return of Jesus in his capacity as the Jewish Messiah, Son of God, and Son of man. This includes the early Christian notion that scriptural prophecies relating to the end of the age, the final judgment and the Day of the Lord would coincide with Jesus' Parousia, in his capacity as the returning Son of man referred to by the Hebrew prophets. The hope of Jesus' imminent return and the apocalyptic events surrounding it (as described in Mk 13) are the essential elements of the Christian apocalyptic definition that I will use in this dissertation. Clifton Black has, regarding this, aptly described Mark's Gospel as *apocalyptically tintured*.⁹ This is to say: it is imbued with a certain amount of apocalyptic content but lacks the spatial aspects attested, for example, in the Book of Revelation or in Paul's description of his journey to the upper heavens (2 Cor. 12:1-3). In Mark there are no heavenly messengers or tours of the heavenly realms. There are only the effects of apocalyptic events that impact earthly inhabitants, that is, those who are not involved in the heavenly events themselves but are affected by them on the ground. In this sense, Christian apocalyptic expectation in Mark's Gospel describes what he and his community expect to happen to them, on earth, during 'the apocalypse' when the end comes.

⁹ Black, *Mark*, 266.

Chapter 2

Mark's Use of the Jewish Scriptures in Jesus' Mission Statement

2.1 Introduction

Mark records the first public words of Jesus (1:15) at the time when he initiates his ministry in Galilee, soon after John the Baptist is imprisoned by King Herod (1:14). The passage in question contains four short phrases (1:15a-d), which have come to be known in Markan scholarship as *Jesus' mission statement*: ὅτι πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς καὶ ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ· μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ ('The time has been fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the gospel'). The reference to the coming of the kingdom of God is the kind of programmatic expression that scholars often attribute to the collective cultural memory of Jesus, due to the pervasive presence of the phrase in various sayings, aphorisms, and parables recorded in the Synoptic Gospels.¹

The saying brings to mind a pronouncement in the prophecies of Ezekiel: 'The time has come, the day of your doom has drawn near' (Ezek. 7:7).² This, intriguingly, is a connection with Mark that is often missed by scholars. One possibility is that Mark's construction of Jesus' mission statement amounts to, or at least includes, a *scripturalizing* strategy³ drawn largely from Ezekiel.⁴ He may

¹ B.D. Chilton, 'Kingdom of God', in B.M. Metzger and M.D. Coogan, (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 408, 409. The references to Jesus reflecting on the kingdom of God (or heaven) occur over fifty times in parables and aphorisms attributed to him. All three of the Synoptic writers attest that Jesus came preaching the kingdom (e.g., Mt. 9:35; Mk 1:14; Lk. 4:43).

² J.D.G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making, Vol. 1* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2003), 438. Dunn notes that the concept of time fulfilled was common in both Greek and Hebrew thought. The phrase in Mark 1:15 he likens to Ezekiel 7:7 but does not comment further on the interpretative potential of this scriptural allusion.

³ J.H. Newman, *Before the Bible: The Liturgical Body of the Formation of the Scriptures in Early Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 18. Newman uses the term 'scripturalization' in reference to embedded prayers and remarks that, on one level, indicate that 'scripture is not reappropriated innocently but is done to shape particular kinds of subjects and particular kinds of communities. The inclusion of [such prayers] in texts lends them a divine authority, typically mediated through community leaders, whether they are depicted in the narrative, like Daniel, or as the explicit 'author' if not scribe, of a letter, like Paul'. The term has also been used to describe specific communities, for example by Vincent Wimbush, who acknowledges how scripture has become present through modifications or manipulations of biblical words and their perceived meanings in relation to African Americans throughout the past 400 years.

⁴ Yarbrow Collins, *Mark*, 2. She posits: 'It is quite plausible that the author of the second Gospel modeled his work, at least in part, on the narrative books of the Old Testament'.

have done this in order to establish the setting of Jesus' mission as apocalyptic to his readers, perhaps coming on the brink of the Day of the Lord. Though Mark does not explicitly or comprehensively cite or even overtly evoke Ezekiel 7 in Mark 1:15, he does seem to have re-contextualized several of its elements by adding a couple of Greek phrases to it, namely ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ and πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ, phrases that are not found in Ezekiel. This was done, in all likelihood, to appeal specifically to Jewish-Christian believers who may have understood the implication of evoking the imagery of doom or the Day of the Lord,⁵ which worked to warn them to repent and believe in the gospel before that day was upon them. Within the Markan context, as will be shown in the following chapters, Ezekiel's 'doom' (7:7, 10, 12) implies Jesus' second coming (Mk 13:24-27, 33-36).

2.2 What We Can Know of Mark's Sources

Mark was, as far as it can be known, not an eyewitness to the sayings and events he records in his Gospel; thus, it may be assumed that he worked from source material. In such a capacity, it is likely that he pieced together various phrases and aphorisms from remembered Jesus traditions and placed them in a particular chronological order⁶ to serve the themes of his narrative.⁷ C.C. Black believes that his source material consisted primarily of the Greek Septuagintal texts⁸ as well as existing Jesus traditions that reflected the communities' memory of Jesus' life and mission,

⁵ J. Galambush, 'Ezekiel', in J. Barton and J. Muddiman (eds.), *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 540, explains that Ezekiel's announcement of Israel's doom seems to be built on Amos' announcement of the Day of the Lord (8:9, 10), a day traditionally celebrating the Divine Warrior's conquest of his enemies, but which the prophets re-envisioned as a day of judgment against Israel. Thus, Amos' declaration of 'the end' (8:2) reappears in Ezek. 7:2.

⁶ Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 3-4, points out that it was Papias, cited by Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 3.39.15), who noted that 'Mark became Peter's interpreter and wrote accurately all that he remembered, not, indeed, in order of the things said or done by the Lord. For he had not heard the Lord, nor had he followed him, but later on, as I said, followed Peter, who used to give teaching as necessity demanded but not making, as it were, an arrangement of the Lord's oracles.' Yarbro Collins notes that this remark has been interpreted in various ways. The question is what kind of 'order' is meant. She posits that Papias was either referring to a historically reliable chronological order or to some sort of literary order. My point is simply that Mark attempted to put the individual stories of Jesus into a logical and thematic order in terms of plausible time, place, and circumstance in order to relate them to his audience and to support his rhetorical purpose. Whether or not the order he chose was chronologically exact or historically accurate is somewhat beside the point; the order served his purpose.

⁷ Moloney, *Gospel of Mark*, 6. See also R. Bultmann, *History and Eschatology* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1955), 338, 350, who maintains that 'in Mark we can see clearly and easily that the most ancient tradition consisted of individual sections and that the connecting together was secondary'.

⁸ Black, *Mark*, 33.

including an oral tradition of his words and deeds.⁹ Though we can posit some specific features of that tradition, it is extremely difficult to determine exactly which sources Mark used, and what those sources contained.¹⁰ It can only be maintained with a degree of certainty that Mark *did* use sources (oral and/or written), since he was not himself an observer of all that he records.

There are some conjectures about Mark's role as compiler of his sources that can be postulated at this juncture of the discussion. For example, it can be reasonably assumed that he was an early Christian writer immersed in the oral tradition - the collective memory of Jesus - that developed in the years following Jesus' death. He would also almost certainly have participated in primitive Christian rites such as baptism. Mark likely had exposure to short narratives about Jesus that were used in such rites before the time of his gospel writing,¹¹ as well as an early passion narrative and an eschatological core (cf. Mk 13).¹² He may also have had access to an independent parable and miracle 'gospel' or a collection of analogous traditions.¹³ Depending on the identity of the author,¹⁴ he may have had access to certain eyewitness accounts of Jesus, which should not be trivialized,¹⁵ but the extent to which we may say that he used such accounts as sources to produce his Gospel, is pure speculation, since those sources are not available for examination.

2.3 The Mission Statement as an Anachronistic Declaration

Though Mark presents the mission statement as one made by Jesus himself in 1:15, it is difficult to reconcile that Jesus would ever have made the pronouncement in the way it is expressed in the first chapter of the gospel narrative. The statement on its face is anachronistic. It is unlikely,

⁹ W. Wrede, *The Messianic Secret* (London: James Clarke Publishing, 1971), 131. Wrede claims that Mark did not write history but imposed Christian dogma upon the narrative. His early work in redaction criticism investigated the theological perspectives that inspired the evangelist to gather material from the Christian sources and to shape them in a particular way. For example, he notes that Papias claimed that Mark was not a follower of Jesus but acted as an interpreter for Peter and essentially dictated his version of the events.

¹⁰ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 9-24.

¹¹ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 57-59.

¹² Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 57-59.

¹³ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 57-59.

¹⁴ See detailed treatments on the issue of authorship in Hooker, *Saint Mark*, 5-8; Moloney, *Gospel of Mark*, 12-16; Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 2-6; and Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 17-24.

¹⁵ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 24. See also V. Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 2nd Edition (Stuttgart: Macmillan Reprint Press, 1953), 26-31; Telford, *Theology*, 14.

for example, that Jesus on the first day of his new ministry would have spoken of *the gospel* or good news (εὐαγγέλιον) as something that, as Mark suggests, must be *believed in*. This statement just does not fit the historical context, particularly as the notion of a gospel, at least as a literary form, had not developed by Jesus' or even Mark's time. Even if εὐαγγέλιον ('good news') in Mk 1:1 and 1:15 refers simply to *the message* or good news *about* Jesus, it still does not comport to the idea that the message was an object of belief in c.30 CE. Also, somewhat difficult to accept as historical is the way in which εὐαγγέλιον is presented in 1:14, where Jesus appears jubilant over the *good* news that *the time has been fulfilled* (1:15a). This seems very much at odds with Mark's presentation of the *doom* of Ezekiel. Would Jesus have been jubilant about approaching doom on the inauguration day of his new ministry, or is the Markan Jesus' jubilation simply as a product of Mark's storytelling, to moderate the impact of his allusion to Ezekiel's doom? Mark seems to have incorporated too much in this condensed statement for it to be read literally or historically. It is far more likely that it is designed to support his overall imperative, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5 of the dissertation, where the good news of Jesus has special meaning in Mark's own time and circumstances.

2.4 Mark's Engagement with the Jewish Scriptures

Scholars note that Mark uses the Jewish Scriptures extensively in his narrative, often placing scriptural words or citations on the lips of Jesus to tell the story.¹⁶ Joel Marcus observes that Mark

¹⁶ J. Marcus, *The Way of the Lord, Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (Nashville: John Knox/Westminster Press, 1992), 2-7, credits A. Suhl, who in 1965 published *Die Funktion der alttestamentlichen Zitate und Anspielungen im Markusevangelium* (Gutersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1965), with the first catalogue of allusions and citations from the OT in the Markan text. He says that Suhl approached the catalogue from a redaction-critical perspective, which Marcus says launched some limited examination by others in various reviews and papers, including E. Grasser, who said in a review in *TLZ* 9 (1966), 667-69, that Mark used the OT Scriptures as a paint box to color important sections of his Gospel, and that he typically interpreted OT passages as fulfillments that came to fruition in his narrative. Work on scriptural allusions in regard to Mark 13 was initiated by L. Hartman in *Prophecy Interpreted: The Formation of Some Jewish Apocalyptic Texts of the Eschatological Discourse, Mark 13* (Lund: Gleerup, 1966). Marcus notes that not much happened after the 1960s, in regard to the examination of scriptural allusions in the Markan text, until the 1980s when H.J. Steichele published his dissertation on the OT motifs occurring in Markan Christology, *Der leidende Sohn Gottes* (New York: F. Pausset, 1980). Marcus remarks that although he (Marcus) has been focused on Mark's Christology and titles (Son of man, Son of God), as entry points for Mark's OT themes and fulfillments, recent scholarship focused on Mark's narrative approach to the subject is on the rise and in his view, a growing force in scholarship that is challenging the historical-critical view. The narrative approach sees Jesus' true identity revealed in the flow of Mark's stories about Jesus.

was influenced by Jewish Scripture much more than is generally thought.¹⁷ Of particular relevance to this analysis is something that Marcus touches upon in the introduction of his 1992 book, *The Way of the Lord*, where he explains that Mark has a tendency to expand small allusions to the Jewish Scriptures, sometimes stretching just a few sentences into a much larger narrative unit that serves his theological purpose. This in all likelihood is what occurs in Mk 1:15, where the evangelist alludes to, and as will be argued, conflates several Jewish Scriptures, to conform them to his situation. Marcus contends that Mark uses different versions of the Jewish Scriptures to purposefully choose those which are serviceable for his theological agenda, sometimes blurring the lines between citation and interpretative allusion.¹⁸ That this is happening in the mission statement will be considered in Chapters 3 and 4 below.

Another aspect of Mark's allusions that is of interest in this discussion is that Mark's use of the Jewish Scriptures is often vague and imprecise. While Mark at times alerts his readers to quotations from Scripture by using the phrase 'it is written' (see 1:2, 3; 7:6, 7; 11:17; 12:10, 11, 36), he predominantly embeds them more deeply within the narrative.¹⁹ Mark is therefore prone to alluding to Scripture without any clear signposting (cf. 1:11; 4:10-12; 7:37; 10:2-9; 11:9). Thus, it will be argued that Mark, in Jesus' mission statement, does not call out the scripture he alludes to from Ezekiel 7, but rather embeds it in a statement attributed to Jesus.

From the very onset of Mark's Gospel, the author *conflates* passages from the Jewish Scriptures.²⁰ In Mk 1:2 three different scriptural passages are combined into a single quotation: 'Behold, I send

¹⁷ Marcus, *The Way*, 199.

¹⁸ Marcus, *The Way*, 199, 200. Marcus explains that Mark employs various exegetical strategies that have their background in the Jewish interpretations of the Old Testament. He notes that the conjuring up of a larger context of a passage through the citation of a specific verse or two is a consistent Markan practice that conforms to the same practice in rabbinic literature. Marcus notes that Mark will often adjust an OT text and make a choice of OT version because it is theologically serviceable and through adjustment, Mark will make it more applicable to his situation, which Marcus describes as 'the eschatological expectation that gripped the Jewish world in the period leading up and including the Jewish War of A.D. 66-74.' This practice, he says, includes the conflation of Old Testament texts, the reconciliation of scriptural contradictions, and the blurring of the line between scripture and interpretation.

¹⁹ Black, *Mark*, 33.

²⁰ H.C. Kee, 'The Function of Scriptural Quotations and Allusions in Mark 11-16', in E. Ellis and E. Grässer (eds.), *Jesus und Paulus: Festschrift für Werner Georg Kümmel zum 70. Geburtstag* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 181. Kee says that 'the most significant parallel between Markan exegesis and the exegetical method employed at

My messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight' (Ex. 23:20; Mal. 3:1; Isa. 40:3). Mark has used the words of scriptural prophets, namely Malachi and Isaiah, to lay the groundwork for an assertion that John the Baptist is Jesus' forerunner in fulfillment of Jewish prophecy.²¹ The practice of conflating the Jewish Scriptures to support the author's theological themes is also, it will be argued in the analysis that follows, at work in Jesus' mission statement.²²

2.5 Mark's Allusion to Ezekiel 7 in Jesus' Mission Statement

Mark appears to allude to Ezekiel's phrase, *the time has come* (ήκει ο καιρός), which in the mission statement is *the time has been fulfilled* (ὅτι πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρός) and again to Ezekiel's phrase *the day draws near* (ιδού η ημέρα), as *the kingdom of God draws near* (καὶ ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ). Mark, it can be proposed, has replaced Ezekiel's concept of nearness of a day of doom ('Day of the Lord' in the LXX) with the arrival of the kingdom of God. This appears to be a Markan conflation, which equates one idea with the other, intimating that the kingdom of God will come on the day of Ezekiel's doom – that is, on the Day of the Lord. Mark has deftly moved the tension from Israel's looming destruction in the direction of Jesus' Parousia, thus attaching a Jesus-centered hope to the Day of the Lord. Mark alludes to Ezekiel 7 in several places, which can be summarized as follows:

Qumran is the juxtaposing of scriptures that in their origins had little or nothing to do with each other, but in the hands of the exegete are shown to be mutually illuminating and give rise to theological perceptions that were not anticipated in any of the original components and thus define the eschatological community, its hopes and obligations'.

²¹ Marcus, *The Way*, 12, identifies this sort of conflation of Old Testament texts as a familiar practice in postbiblical Judaism and is especially common in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

²² R.B. Hays, *Echoes of the Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016), 15, notes that Mark's Gospel tells a mysterious story enveloped in apocalyptic urgency that focuses relentlessly on the cross and ends on a note of enigmatic hope. He observes that many of the key images in Mark's narrative are drawn from Jewish Scripture, though the readers of Mark are often left to make the connections for themselves. Hays claims that Mark alludes to and conflates Scripture from the very beginning of his Gospel (1:2, 3), putting the narrative within the framework of Isaiah from the very outset. Then he says that Mark proceeds to allude to the Jewish Scriptures in other passages that evoke images of divine wrath, and which are intended by the author to address his own first-century setting, warning that the time is fulfilled, and the pronounced judgment in Scripture is at hand.

Reference	English Translation	NT Greek Text (Mark)/ LXX (Ezekiel)	Hebrew Text
Mk 1:15	The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God draws near	ὅτι πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς καὶ ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ	
Ezek. 7:7 (4)	the time has come, a day draws near	ἴκει ὁ καιρὸς ἤγγικεν ἡ ἡμέρα	בָּ הַיּוֹם קָרַב הַיּוֹם
Ezek. 7:10	Behold, the day (of the Lord), behold it has come	ἴδού ἡ ἡμέρα κυρίου ἴκει	הִנֵּה הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה בָּא
Ezek. 7:12	The time has come, behold the day draws near	ἴκει ὁ καιρὸς ἰδοὺ ἡ ἡμέρα	בָּ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה קָרַב הַיּוֹם

As Richard Hays points out, the theme of eschatological restoration is inextricably interwoven in Mark with the theme of inbreaking, thus again connecting the Jewish Scriptures to the Gospel of Mark.²³ This kind of embedded allusion, building upon Mark’s theme of the Parousia inbreaking on ‘the Day of the Lord’, appears again in Mark 13:35. This forms another embedded allusion which serves as a thinly veiled metaphor to denote the arrival of the Parousia; this is described by Mark as an event that will surprise the unwatchful ‘in the middle of the night or in the morning’.²⁴

The Hebrew word צָפְיָרָה (Ezek. 7:7 and 10) that has been translated into the English word ‘doom’ by some English translators (NRSV, NASB, NIV) has otherwise been translated as ‘the morning’ by other translators (KJV, GNV, NMV). The translators who chose ‘morning’ have obtained the

²³ Hays, *Echoes*, 19.

²⁴ Mark 13:35 mentions that the master of the house may return ‘when the rooster crows or in the morning’, which is similar to a phrase that he uses in 14:30, when Peter denies Jesus THREE times ‘before the rooster crows twice’. Expositors sometimes refer to this saying in Mark as a reference to the Roman four watches, but I believe that this may reflect a common Jewish aphorism that is consistent with ‘one’s fate being exposed at dawn’, even as the cock crows when all deeds are exposed in the light of day with the consequences that follow, cf. Ezek. 33:20-22.

context from the previous verse, where ‘the end has awakened against you, see it comes’ (7:6). Thus Ezekiel 7:7 is interpreted as *the following day that is now come*. Moving between 7:7 and 7:10 presents some complexity in translation, as הַצִּפּוּרָה in Ezekiel 7:7 is in an absolute form, meaning ‘behold the doom’, while in 7:10 it is in construct form, הַצִּפּוּרָה meaning ‘your doom has come’ with ‘the rod has budded’. The Septuagint of Ezekiel, interestingly, renders הַצִּפּוּרָה as ‘a Day of the Lord’.²⁵ Thus Mark, it is proposed, refers to the morning of the Parousia as Ezekiel refers to the doom that awakens on the Day of the Lord.

Reference	English Translations	NT Greek Text (Mark) / LXX (Ezekiel)	Hebrew Text
Mk 13:35	when the rooster crows, or in the morning	ἀλεκτοροφωνίας ἢ πρωΐ·	
Ezek. 7:6	the end has come, the end has come, it has awakened against you	το πέρας ἤκει ἤκει το πέρας ἐξηγέρθη προς σε	קָם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וְהָיָה הַצִּפּוּרָה הַזֶּה בְּאֵיךְ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה
Ezek. 7:7	behold, the morning (doom or diadem) is upon you	ἰδοὺ ἤκει πλοκή ἐπὶ σε	בֹּאֵה הַצִּפּוּרָה אֵלֶיךָ
Ezek. 7:10	behold, a Day of the Lord has come, the rod has budded	ἰδοὺ ἡ ἡμέρα κυρίου ἤκει ἡ ράβδος ἤνθηκεν	הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה הַצִּפּוּרָה בֹּאֵה יְצִאָה צֶדֶק מִמִּטָּה פְּרָח

Ezekiel thus provides Mark with the tension required for the mission statement to intimate the notion of doom arriving on the Day of the Lord, at the time when Jesus will return. This is later confirmed by Mark in the parable of the master of the house returning home on the morning of

²⁵ E. Brown, S. Driver, C. Briggs, *Hebrew & English Lexicon* (Cambridge: Tyndale House, 1994), 862. The word is found in its absolute form in Ezekiel 7:7, meaning *a plait or chaplet*, and sometimes *doom* or *diadem* or *coronet*, as it is used in Isaiah 28:5. The idea of one’s fate coming round to them in the morning is, according to the authors, apparently taken from the construct form found in Ezekiel 7:10, which the authors find dubious in using the translation of ‘morning’ there. However, in the context of Ezekiel 7:6 (‘awakened’ or ‘dawned’) there is consistency with the idea that the morning has brought the ‘day’ or as in 7:10 ‘the rod has budded’.

the Parousia.²⁶ This is one way in which Mark uses the Jewish Scriptures, particularly the prophecies of Ezekiel, to connect the Day of the Lord with the Parousia of Jesus. In Chapter 5, I will examine another likely scriptural allusion in Mark 1:15b, where the author evokes a Danielic reference of ‘one like the son of man’ (7:13,14) in order to strengthen the connection between the Day of the Lord and the nearness of the kingdom of God.

2.6 Individual Accountability and Repentance in Ezekiel and Mark

In both Ezekiel and Mark, *individuals* must repent in order to make themselves ‘right’ with YHWH/God in their own generations. This is another way in which Mark strengthens the mission statement with allusions to the Jewish Scriptures. It was unusual in the Jewish Scriptures for a prophet to focus on individual accountability rather than imploring the whole nation of Israel to come to repentance for the sins they had accumulated over many generations. Galambush notes in this respect that the prophet Ezekiel is known for ‘his assertions, primarily set forth in Ch. 18 (cf. 33:10-20) that contrary to the perspective expressed in Ex. 34:7 and elsewhere, YHWH does not visit the sins of the parents upon the children, rather each person is judged on the basis of their individual merit’.²⁷ This reduction to individual responsibility in Ezekiel is viewed by Klaus Koch as radical and a divergence from the traditional faith, which he believes may be attributed to the prophet having grown up during the exile, cut off from the inherited forms of community and interaction.²⁸ Galambush concludes that each person’s merit is, for Ezekiel, determined solely by their current actions and that past sins will not count against a repentant individual.

This made Ezekiel an apt choice for Markan scripturalization, for the evangelist may have viewed Ezekiel’s appeal to individuals as a good fit for his own appeal to each believer to repent and believe in the gospel. It also makes it possible that the allusion in Mark 1:15 extends as far as the word ‘repent’ in the mission statement (1:15c). The final phrase of the mission statement (1:15d),

²⁶ Galambush, ‘Ezekiel’, 540, notes that just as there is in Ezekiel 1 a disjointed syntax, there is in Ezekiel 7 the same effect where the writing style lends to an uncanny urgency, expressed in form and content, of the panic that Ezekiel and his readers seemed to feel over YHWH’s approach.

²⁷ Galambush, ‘Ezekiel’, 537.

²⁸ K. Koch, ‘Latter Prophets: The Major Prophets’ in L.G. Perdue (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 365.

however, cannot be traced easily to an allusion from the Jewish Scriptures, as it contains a uniquely Christian idea - *belief in the gospel*. Thus, it will be necessary to examine the components of the statement more closely, in the original Greek of the Markan text, to consider the meaning of each phrase independently.

Chapter 3

A Textual Analysis of the Mission Statement

3.1 Introduction

Thus far, I have posited that Mark employed the Book of Ezekiel to craft Jesus' mission statement in 1:15, at least in terms of the first three phrases of the statement (1:15abc). The last phrase of the statement (1:15d), however, appears to contain certain Christian elements having to do with belief in the gospel. To understand how these components are interconnected, a deeper examination of the text is required.

It is useful at this point in the analysis to catalogue and examine closely each individual phrase of Jesus' mission statement. This will help to set the stage for the detailed discussion of the literary and historical context that will follow in Chapters 4 and 5 and will lay the groundwork for a discussion on how the mission statement has been formulated by Mark. The textual analysis that follows will show that Mark's selection of certain Greek words and phrases were used to highlight key themes and to reinforce his motifs. The author may be seen working his narrative for a rhetorical purpose, namely, to tell the story of Jesus in a particular way in order to appeal to his readers to decide about what they are reading and to do something about it.

3.2 The Four Phrases of the Mission Statement

The first phrase of the mission statement, *πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς*, is used by Mark only here (in 1:15a). He uses the word *καιρὸς* rarely, just five times in all, and only once in anything other than a speech attributed to Jesus (Mk 1:15; 10:33; 11:13; 12:2; 13:33). The phrase *βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ* is used with some frequency (15x) and in various settings (Mk 1:15; 4:11, 26, 30; 9:1, 47; 10:14, 15, 23, 24, 25; 12:34; 14:25; 15:43); all these occurrences are found in speeches made by Jesus, except where Mark refers to it as a teaching belonging to Jesus (1:14) and in describing Joseph of Arimathea as someone who was 'waiting for it' (15:43). In terms of the kingdom being *at hand* (*ἤγγικεν*), Mark again uses the phrase only in the mission statement (1:15b). The verb to *repent* (*μετανοέω*) is used twice, in Mark 1:15c and again with reference to the preaching of Jesus'

followers (6:12). Mark uses the word *believe* (πιστεύω) eleven times in various contexts (1:15; 5:36; 9:23, 24, 42; 11:23, 24, 31; 13:21; 15:32; 16:17), eight of which are attributed to Jesus, and three times to denote belief in Jesus. Mark employs it in the phrase '*believe in the gospel*' (πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ) only once (1:15d). The word for *gospel* (εὐαγγέλιον) is used six times by Mark (1:1; 1:14; 1:15; 13:10; 14:9; 16:15), mostly in association with the Christian mission or the preaching of the εὐαγγέλιον to all nations, 'Go into the world and preach the *gospel/good news* to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved, and he who does not will be condemned' (16:15, 16). In Mark 1:1, however, it carries another meaning as 'the *gospel/good news* of Jesus Christ', whereas in 1:14 it is used as the *gospel* of the kingdom of God to denote Jesus' own preaching.

The phrases that Mark uses exclusively in the mission statement are therefore as follows: πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς, 'the time has been fulfilled', and ἤγγικεν, 'at hand'. Though he uses καιρὸς once outside the context of Jesus' own speech, he uses it to explain Jesus' rebuke of a fig tree that was not bearing fruit in its proper season (11:13, 14). The two phrases in Mark 1:15ab, then, have an agrarian aspect. This will be shown later to be of particular relevance to the author in connecting Jesus' mission statement to several of his parables and to apocalyptic content in Mark 13.

With regard to βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ, Mark claims that Jesus came proclaiming it (1:14), although this cannot be confirmed by any source older than Mark. Paul did use the term, but not in reference to the proclamation of Jesus (see 1 Cor. 4:20; 6:10). The phrase πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ ('believe in the gospel') may be unique to Mark's mission statement, but the use of the words πιστεύετε and εὐαγγέλιον appear independently elsewhere as Markan favorites, which he often employs to describe the Christian mission or to invoke a polemic. μετανοεῖτε ('repent') is elsewhere associated with the mission of John the Baptist (1:4), though Mark does note that Jesus similarly called sinners to repentance (2:17) and that it was considered part of Jesus' mission by his disciples (6:12).

3.3 The First Phrase: ‘The Time has been Fulfilled’ (Mk 1:15a)

The first phrase of the statement, *πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρός*, is commonly translated as ‘the time has been fulfilled’. The Greek word *καιρός* can mean ‘decisive moment’ (cf. Mk 12:2; 13:33), ‘opportunity’ (Heb. 11:15) or even a ‘span of time’ (Mk 10:30; 11:13).¹ As used in the first part of Jesus’ mission statement, *καιρός* carries the definite article to refer to *the* time that is measured according to God’s design (cf. Dan. 7:22; Ezek. 7:12; see also 1 Pet. 1:11; Rev. 1:3).² There is ordinary time, *ὁ χρόνος*, which measures human events, and there is God-directed opportune time, *ὁ καιρός*, which is the kind of time whose fulfillment is characterized by Jesus as good news.³ Clifton Black emphasizes in this respect that *ὁ καιρός* is not just any day (*ὁ χρόνος*) but *D-Day*.⁴ The English word ‘time’ thus seems to fit *χρόνος* more precisely than *καιρός*. Mark likely chooses *ὁ καιρός* for a very specific reason.

In the Septuagint, *καιρός* is used to translate the Hebrew word *קַיִר* and the Aramaic word *קַיִר*. Both words signify a ‘decisive point in time’; they stress *divine appointment* and refer commonly to *seasons*.⁵ The reference is to *God’s time* (cf. Job 39; Num. 23; Eccles 3; Dan. 2:21 LXX). It is thus used in Lamentations to denote God fixing the time of judgment (Lam. 1:21).⁶ The Aramaic *קַיִר* is of particular interest, since it may be a word that Jesus himself used. Maurice Casey provides salutary reminders in this respect that there ‘should be no doubt that Jesus spoke Aramaic’ and that ‘Aramaic was the language in which the traditions about him were first transmitted’.⁷ Casey further argues that Mark’s Aramaic sources came to him without having been translated (into Greek), and that the most likely time for that translation would have been after 65 CE when Mark

¹ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 172.

² Moloney, *Gospel of Mark*, 49.

³ Moloney, *Gospel of Mark*, 49.

⁴ Black, *Mark*, 65.

⁵ G. Dellling, ‘Kairos’, in G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), 389. Dellling notes that the non-biblical use of *καιρός* in ancient Greece represented a chance or opportunity that needed to be boldly grasped. He goes on to say that Stoics stressed the need of an individual to be responsible for meeting the demands of the *καιρός*, which included a religious summons to action, under the god *Kairos*. See also Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 438, where he notes that ‘*καιρός* here obviously has its weightier sense - the decisive time, the appointed time, the time of’.

⁶ Dellling, ‘Kairos’, 389.

⁷ M. Casey, *Aramaic Sources of Mark’s Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 260.

and the other gospel writers, including Matthew and Luke, felt pressure to modify source material to accord with certain theological perspectives such as the delay of the Parousia.⁸

Following the Septuagint translation of Ezekiel, Mark uses *καιρός* to describe the time of doom (1:15a; 13:33; cf. Ezek. 7:7b; 7:12).⁹ He also employs *καιρός* in several agrarian parables, describing *the time* of the fig tree budding and *the time* of the returning vineyard owner in metaphors for Jesus' Parousia.¹⁰ Mark always uses *καιρός* in the temporal sense of 'decisive point' (cf. 1:15),¹¹ where the seriousness of the decision required at the opportune moment provides intensity.¹² *καιρός* represents divine ripeness, like at the end of a growing season when God's work to bring his spiritual crop to harvest comes to fruition at the end of its proper *season*.¹³ The word carries a sense of personal *fortune* when applied to an individual, but it is not the same as one's *fate*. It represents a person's chance for good fortune that must be boldly grasped, or it will be lost.¹⁴ One awaits the *καιρός* from God and one's own fortune falls under it, though its subject may not be able to control the circumstances or outcomes to bring it about for himself. He may proclaim it when it arrives, but it is up to God to bring it to fulfillment. In this sense, one may only grasp and accept the *καιρός* that is given by God.¹⁵

The way in which Mark uses *καιρός* in the mission statement is closely associated with its use elsewhere in his Gospel (as has already been touched upon, and see further below) to highlight moments of watchfulness with regard to expected apocalyptic events.¹⁶ As Balz puts it: 'In the context of encouragement to watchfulness, Mark provides the reason, that you do not know the

⁸ Casey, *Aramaic Sources*, 259.

⁹ Delling, 'Kairos', 390, cites NT occurrences where *καιρός* is used as a term for the Last Judgment (cf. Lk. 21:8; 1 Pet. 5:6; Rev. 1:3).

¹⁰ Black, *Mark*, 272, 273, links *καιρός* to Mk 13:33, where Jesus tells his disciples to 'watch and stay alert, for you do not know when the *time* is'. He notes that 'time' here is *καιρός* and that it is connected to the idea of imminence, which in Mark is followed by agrarian examples like the fig tree budding to denote imminence and also the certainty of arrival.

¹¹ Delling, 'Kairos', 389.

¹² Casey, *Aramaic Sources*, 260.

¹³ W. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Second Edition, W.F. Arndt, F.W. Danker, and F.W. Gingrich (eds.), (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 395.

¹⁴ Delling, 'Kairos', 389.

¹⁵ Bauer, *Lexicon*, 395.

¹⁶ Bauer, *Lexicon*, 395.

πότε ὁ καιρός ἐστίν (13:33) confirming the unknown, unforeseeable moment of Jesus' Parousia'.¹⁷

When Mark uses the term καιρός in Jesus' parables or sayings (cf. 10:30; 12:2; 13:33), it is sometimes a metaphor for times¹⁸ or seasons, and for fruit that is to ripen and be harvested.¹⁹ In Mark 12:2 the ripeness of fruit is an indication of the hot sun of approaching summer, bringing the sudden return of the vineyard owner who will inspect his crop at the time of the harvest. Mark may be attempting to anchor Jesus' mission statement to a community memory of Jesus regarding his ministry, parables, and resonances of the Jewish Scriptures. The agrarian aspect of καιρός reminds readers that the harvest of messianic fruit must be picked and processed before the vinedresser returns to find his grapes rotting on the ground in the summer sun (cf. Hos. 9:10, 16; Mic. 7:1, Jer. 8:13). The word πεπλήρωται when combined with καιρός accentuates the latent opportunity for Israel to act on its own before YHWH calls them to account.²⁰ It implies a time for a decision at a moment of crisis.²¹ Mark therefore uses the word καιρός to express the opportunity given to characters within the text as well as to readers of the text to decide to accept Jesus as Messiah and to embrace the gospel while there is time to do so.

Mark seems to imply that Israel's failure to accept Jesus as the Messiah was a missed opportunity. In another agrarian employment of the term καιρός, he describes how Jesus curses a fig tree (Ch.

¹⁷ J. Baumgarten, 'Kairos', in H. Balz and G. Schneider (eds.), *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 233, 234.

¹⁸ Bauer, *Lexicon*, 394. καιρός is sometimes the time in which a tree bears ripe fruit.

¹⁹ Many ancient Israelites were farmers, and the mention of seasons often appears in scriptural stories, motifs and parables. καιρός can apply to that moment between seasons when fruit or grain must be harvested before the cusp of the opposing season is upon the farmer, or the moment of opportunity between seasons will result in ruined crop and lost season.

²⁰ C.M. Tuckett, 'Mark', in J. Barton and J. Muddiman (eds.), *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 910, notes that such stories fit well into the social situation at the time of Jesus in Galilee, when many tenant farmers suffered at the hands of absentee landlords who demanded crippling returns from the land by way of rent.

²¹ Baumgarten, 'Kairos', 232. See also Black, *Mark*, 68, 397, who refers to καιρός as 'the time of crisis'. He notes that in Mark 1:15 repentance and belief in the gospel 'are not commendations of generally religious behavior; they are situation-specific, apt responses in a time of crisis.'

11).²² Hooker explains that Mark is clearly linking Jesus' action to Israel's failure. The fig tree in 11:12-14 represents Israel (cf. Isa. 5:1-7), which has failed to produce the appropriate fruits when her messiah came looking for them.²³ Hooker believes the cursing of the fig tree may have been inserted by Mark as a symbol pointing to Israel's rejection of Jesus, which he sandwiched between his action to cleanse the Temple and the parable of the vineyard owner.²⁴

Richard Hays notes that the message announced by the Markan Jesus contains strongly apocalyptic content, and that 'The time is fulfilled' (πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς) reflects the thought world behind texts such as Daniel 7:22, 'then judgment was given to the holy ones of the Most High, and the time (LXX: ὁ καιρὸς), arrived when the holy ones gained possession of the kingdom'.²⁵ Hays goes on to say that in the Jewish apocalyptic understanding of history, the Markan Jesus in Mk 1:15 arouses a keen hope that the moment of God's intervention is at last at hand.

From this analysis, it appears that Mark uses the καιρὸς to intimate the decisive national and individual moment of the Messiah's arrival, which comes as the fulfillment of Jewish prophecy. For those who respond appropriately to this opportunity, the kingdom draws near, while at the same time, for those who have chosen to respond inappropriately, or perhaps not at all, their doom has gathered.

²² Tuckett, 'Mark', 909, notes that the cursing of the fig tree is of questionable historical origin, as it depicts an arbitrary act of gratuitous destruction by Jesus, which was uncharacteristic of him. He believes, agreeing with Hooker and others, that Mark used the episode as a *sandwiching* device to highlight Israel's failure to accept Jesus as the Messiah. In the parable of the fig tree, 'the fruitless tree represents Israel, who should have welcomed her Messiah, Jesus; yet when Jesus comes to the heart of Israel herself, Jerusalem and the Temple, he is rejected, and the tree has no fruit: the result is inevitably judgment'. See also Black, *Mark*, 272, who notes that 'figs and fig trees are common biblical images that denote the imminence or certainty of God's judgment of a religiously sterile Israel (11:12-14, 20-21): Common to both 11:24 and 13:28 is not only a fig tree, but the correlation of its leaves or branches with a certain season (καιρὸς, 11:13b), interpreted eschatologically. When the fig leaves appear, summer is near. When the disciples witness things that build to a climax, 13:6-27, something or someone is near or at the very gates'.

²³ Hooker, *St. Mark*, 261.

²⁴ Hooker, *St. Mark*, 261.

²⁵ Hays, *Echoes*, 31.

3.4 The Second Phrase: 'The Kingdom of God Draws Near' (Mk 1:15b)

The next phrase in the mission statement is ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ, 'the kingdom of God is at hand [or: draws near]'. This is perhaps meant to reflect the central theme of Jesus' ministry, namely the proclamation of the kingdom of God. Whether Jesus himself came proclaiming the kingdom (cf. Mk 1:14) has been long debated,²⁶ and recent scholars focus on the *memory* of Jesus that may have lingered among his followers in the early years rather than attempting to extract authentic Jesus statements from the text. Anthony Le Donne and Chris Keith have recently argued that the methods of discovering *historical* or *authentic* words or pericopes of Jesus in the NT have been based on faulty criteria.²⁷ They persuasively argue, in line with a growing number of reputable NT scholars,²⁸ that the criteria applied by form and redaction critics from the 18th century onwards are dependent upon the presentation of Jesus through the interpretive lens of his followers. That Jesus came proclaiming the kingdom of God, exactly as Mark frames it (1:14, 15), is historically doubtful, but may (or may not) reflect a cultural memory of Jesus that Mark built upon, which was based on the tradition that existed at the time he wrote his Gospel.²⁹

²⁶ A good many reputable scholars over the years, including Weiss, Schweitzer, Bultmann, Sanders, Allison, Hooker among others, have generally accepted that Jesus came proclaiming the kingdom of God. Some, like E.P. Sanders, in *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1977), propose exceptions that were focused on the Jewish and Palestinian aspects of Jesus' teachings, positing that material regarding the historical Jesus was handed down by the emerging Church and should be handled with caution. Dunn, in *Jesus Remembered*, focuses on memory and eyewitness theory to assert that an inclusive kingdom of God was part of the first-century Jewish memory of Jesus, which also became part of the oral tradition.

²⁷ A. Le Donne, *Historical Jesus: What we can know and how we can know it* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 134, maintains that recovering historical information from the text amounts to 'telling stories of memory in a way that can most plausibly account for the available mnemonic evidence'. He posits that the historical Jesus is often depicted to fit an editorial agenda through theological reflection and intentional counter-memory. See also C. Keith, 'The Indebtedness of the Criteria Approach to Form Criticism and Recent Attempts to Rehabilitate the Search for an Authentic Jesus' in Le Donne and Keith (eds.), *Jesus, Criteria and the Demise of Authenticity*, where he notes that 'the majority of scholars would agree that the form critics were right in positing that the transmitters of the Jesus tradition, who were responsible for the final form of the Gospels, had a hand in shaping the tradition to one extent or the other'. Both Le Donne and Keith call for an end to traditional criteria of authenticity as employed by Jesus scholars. The growing consensus of the scholarly community as to whether historical information can be extracted from the NT gospels makes the idea that Jesus can be cast as proclaiming the kingdom of God as somewhat less certain in terms of detail, though not completely out of reach in terms of resonance. See also Hooker, *St. Mark*, 261.

²⁸ Contributors to the volume *Demise of Authenticity* include Dale Allison, Mark Goodacre, Morna Hooker, Scot McKnight, Rafael Rodriguez, Jens Schröter, Loren Stuckenbruck and Dagmar Winter.

²⁹ M.D. Hooker, 'Foreword, Forty Years On', in A. Le Donne and C. Keith (eds.), *Jesus, Criteria, and the Demise of Authenticity* (London: T&T Clark, 2017), xiii-xvii.

Despite the relatively recent scholarly objections to authenticity criteria, Jesus scholars have not completely ruled out the idea that some of what Jesus may have said is discoverable, even if not in absolute terms. The criteria of embarrassment and multiple attestation continue to be cited by Jesus scholars, with caveats for taking such analysis too far or in using the criteria to establish *absolute* authenticity.³⁰ Morna Hooker, in the Foreword to *Jesus, Criteria and the Demise of Authenticity*, calls the search for authenticity ‘a strange conceit’ and says that ‘if we concentrate on the whole rather than on the details, we shall find that we know quite a lot about Jesus, even though we may not be able to reconstruct with certainty any of his sayings or actions...it is beyond question that he taught in parables however difficult it may be to reconstruct them, or to be certain about their original meaning. Few scholars, if any, have doubted that the center of his teaching was the kingdom of God’.³¹

Whatever the origin of the words used by Mark, the author felt sufficiently confident to include the phrase ἡγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ as the core proclamation of Jesus’ teaching. The fact that he felt free to do so must carry some weight, giving due consideration to the possibility that some of Mark’s readers might also have been hearers of Jesus. Such a bold assertion, if not in some way resonant of the memories of those who heard it from Jesus, would have challenged the credence of Mark’s Gospel and its acceptance just thirty or more years after Jesus’ death. It can be safely claimed that the notion of Jesus proclaiming the βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ would have sounded right to Mark’s readers. Of course, I am speaking in terms of what is plausible, not what is knowable. Regardless of speculation regarding Jesus’ use of the term, the consensus that the kingdom of God was a central component of Jesus’ teaching was adopted from the time of Mark’s Gospel and in other NT writings and became part of Christian tradition into the post-apostolic era. The reason why the origin of the phrase is still important is that βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ may have meant something very different to Mark in comparison to how it may have been used by Jesus. For example, for Mark it could have signified the beginning or coming reign of God after Jesus returns for the judgment on the Day of the Lord. Conversely, for Jesus it may have denoted the

³⁰ C. Wassén and T. Hägerland, *Jesus the Apocalyptic Prophet* (New York: T&T Clark, 2021), 79-81.

³¹ Hooker, ‘Forty Years On’, xiii-xvii.

general restoration of Israel. These are two different - though not wholly mutually exclusive - ideas that can take the interpretation of the mission statement into very different directions. For the purpose of this analysis, my primary aim is to seek to determine what the phrase would have meant for Mark. Questions about the meaning of the mission statement must necessarily revolve around the idea that it stems from Markan composition. What is discoverable about the mission statement is discoverable from the way in which Mark has phrased it.

With this in mind, I would like to consider whether βασιλεία του θεού for Mark refers to God's *kingship* or to an actual *kingdom*. This has been an area of interest for scholars attempting to establish whether βασιλεία του θεού refers to *where* God rules or simply to the fact *that* he rules.³² Scholars like Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer claimed that the kingdom of God was deemed to be a physical kingdom that would appear in the future and have political and religious components. Others, like Rudolf Bultmann, regarded the use of the term *kingdom* in the first century CE as being strictly metaphorical. Morna Hooker posits that the concept of the kingship of God derives from Israel's Scriptures, particularly the Psalms (47:7; 97:1; 99:1; 103:19) where the phrase 'kingdom of God' does not occur.³³ Chilton argues that Hebrew and Aramaic verbs for 'to reign' or 'to rule' are cognate with the noun's 'king' and 'kingdom', all from the *mlk* root, whereas the noun 'kingdom' refers to the fact or force of rule rather than to the territory governed.³⁴ Black notes that the phrase is rooted in Jewish apocalypticism (cf. *1 En.* 10:1-11; 25:3-5; 62-63; *As. Mos.* 10:1-10) and that it refers to God's universal dominion over mortal life and human monarchies.³⁵

Some scholars are thus inclined to render the Greek phrase βασιλεία του θεού as the *dominion of God*.³⁶ It may in fact be Mark's intention to build up the notion that the sins of Israel's kings were never appropriately atoned for by the people and that full restoration can only happen

³² Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 172.

³³ Hooker, *St. Mark*, 55.

³⁴ Chilton, *Kingdom of God*, 408.

³⁵ Black, *Mark*, 66.

³⁶ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 172. See also W.R.F. Browning, 'Kingdom of God', *Oxford Dictionary of the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 184; and Hooker, *St. Mark*, 55; as well as Black, *Mark*, 66.

when they recognize the true Messiah. The βασιλεία του θεού in the Markan sense, then, is the *dominion* that becomes available to those who believe that Jesus is the rightful heir of the God of the *domain*. In other words, the dominion of God is only open to those who believe that Jesus is its king. Mark may simply be intimating that an imminent future, where God's dominion will be experienced by believers, is about to dawn. When Jesus returns and begins to act as the Messianic agent of that realm, the *dominion* of God will be manifested on the Day of the Lord. Mark therefore implies that the βασιλεία του θεού is a post-Parousia state. The Parousia and final judgment occur before or at same time that the βασιλεία του θεού dawns. Thus, it draws near (ἤγγικεν) but is not here yet – neither in Jesus' time of speaking nor in Mark's time of writing.

That Mark intends the βασιλεία του θεού to refer strictly to the dominion of God, and not to an actual kingdom, does, however, require further scrutiny. Later on, in Chapter 5 of this dissertation, I will give particular attention to Mark's allusion to Daniel in the mission statement, where he appears to intimate in 1:15b that the Markan Jesus is the Danielic Son of man (Mk 9:1; cf. Dan 7:13, 14), who brings both dominion *and* a kingdom.

Some context at this juncture is useful when considering whether the dominion or kingdom of God, described by the Markan Jesus as being *at hand* (1:15b), is to be understood in terms of being a completely future or partially current condition. Clifton Black stresses that πεπλήρωται ('is fulfilled') and ἤγγικεν ('draws near') are in the perfect tense, pointing not to a future event as such but to something that has occurred in the past (4:11) with present and future consequences (9:1; 15:43).³⁷ Dodd asserts that ἤγγικεν denotes a current condition of arrival,³⁸ but Marcus opts for the notion that it is not here yet, but that it is 'drawing near'.³⁹ This, I think is preferable, particularly if we consider it as an allusion to Ezekiel, where the idea of the Day of the Lord *drawing near* is used in the LXX rendering of Ezekiel 7:7. Given Mark's invocation of the καιρός, the writer metaphorically implies that the dominion of God is the vineyard (12:1) and that the son (12:6) was sent in order to bring in the wine; however, the wicked servants have rejected

³⁷ Black, *Mark*, 66.

³⁸ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 172; see C.H. Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom* (New York: Scribner, 1961), 36, 37.

³⁹ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 172.

him (12:8) and their judgment looms (12:9, 10). This is how the nearness of the kingdom relates to the Markan Jesus; he is the *son of the vineyard owner at vintage time*, at the *καιρός* (1:15a; 12:2). The time of ripening has already occurred and cannot be turned back; the harvest season has come, *it has been fulfilled*, but the crop has been ruined by wicked servants and there is no wine in the offering. Thus, judgment for rejecting the son (12:7-12) and for wasting the crop is what *draws near*. The vineyard owner will give it to others (12:9). This is the consequence of the actions of the wicked servants. The owner's domain has been compromised by them, and they have thus lost the right to sublet it and to handle the fruit. It will be given to others. This is what is coming when the vineyard owner returns.

Both the parable of the vineyard and the mission statement have a negative connotation. During the time of Jesus' ministry, there was an opportunity for Israel to accept him and for him to usher in the messianic harvest, but, as it turned out, the people rejected him and this opportunity was squandered. Mark's readers can right this wrong for themselves and gain the vineyard. From their perspective, the opportunity to repent and to accept the gospel (of Jesus as Messiah) are the means by which they can personally and publicly acknowledge the vineyard owner's son as the rightful heir of God's dominion. In this way, Jesus' parables in Mark provide the key for his readers to understand what is ἤγγικεν – and they can be found in right standing when the vineyard owner returns. When he does come, he will 'destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others' (12:9). Thus, the nearness of the kingdom or dominion of God, in the Markan context, is a warning to the individual of their proximity to wrath, which requires personal action in terms of what comes next in Jesus' mission statement.

3.5 The Third Phrase: 'Repent' (Mk 1:15c)

The Greek word for *repent*, μετανοέω, comprises of μετα (after) and νοέω (to think), and can in certain contexts be translated as *reconsider*. Mark uses the term in the mission statement, where he has Jesus wield the term in much the same way that he presents John the Baptist employing

it as a call to action.⁴⁰ The call to repent, it can be argued, appears to be tantamount to a call to be baptized, as a way to express Christian belief. Mark declares that *John came baptizing* while calling for repentance and the forgiveness of sins (1:4, 5) and that those who came to him for baptism confessed their sins. That Mark adds the words, 'believe in the gospel', implies that repentance and forgiveness of sins may not, from an early Christian perspective, have been enough to secure salvation from sins and that something more than water baptism (John's) was required, namely, a confession of belief in the gospel of Jesus.

The baptism of John, certainly from what Josephus has noted, shows that John's historical baptism offered a remission of sins for a return to YHWH.⁴¹ According to the traditions recorded in the New Testament, John did not require a personal affirmation of belief, only repentance, and he did not impart the gift of the Spirit through his rite but left that to a 'Mightier One' (1:7, 8). Mark provides no information in this respect, nor does he inform us of Jesus' views on the subject. If Jesus imagined his role in the way it is presented by Mark - not simply as the imparter of the Spirit but also of the whole baptismal rite - then he would have relegated John's role to obsolescence.⁴² This is perhaps one reason why Mark reports that Jesus did not begin his ministry until after John had been thrown into prison, in contrast to what is later reported in the Fourth Gospel (3:22-26; 4:1-3), namely, because he wanted to resolve any perceived overlap in their ministries. The early Church may have been embarrassed and did not understand why Jesus would have allowed himself to be baptized by John, since it implied that he needed to receive forgiveness for his own sins.⁴³ This indicates that there may have been confusion or contention in Mark's community over the authoritative baptism as it related to early Christian confession. In other words, some may have felt that John's water baptism was adequate for salvific assurance

⁴⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, XVIII: V, 2, comments that '(John) was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism'.

⁴¹ Moloney, *Gospel of Mark*, 48.

⁴² J. Marcus, *John the Baptist in History and Theology* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2018), 11. Marcus believes that the most obvious reason for the polemic in the Fourth Gospel is that the followers of John the Baptist were claiming that he (with his water baptism) was superior to Jesus. See also Wassén and Hägerland, *Apocalyptic Prophet*, 87, where the authors contend that changes in the NT gospel accounts regarding Jesus' baptism show that his (Jesus) being baptized by John was 'frankly embarrassing and did not fit the dominant image of an exalted Christ in the early Church'.

⁴³ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 164.

(the remission of sins), while others held that a profession of belief in Jesus was required to receive the Holy Spirit as a gift.

Arguably, Mark adds the words, ‘and believe in the gospel’ (1:15d), to emphasize the confession of Jesus as the Son of God and Messiah as the basis for all baptisms and Christian discipleship. The second half of the mission statement (1:15cd) may therefore have been used to enforce the idea of *one baptism, one messiah*. This seems to align best with the way in which Mark begins his gospel account, presenting John as the servant of Jesus rather than the other way around, particularly when John himself is quoted as saying, ‘I indeed baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit’ (Mk 1:8). The invocation of Isaiah 40 in verses 2 and 3 underlines John’s work as preparatory for Jesus’ final work; this will include the baptism of the Spirit that only Jesus can dispense. By the end of Mark 1, it is clear that both water and Spirit are required to meet the standard of Christian baptism, hence the summarizing statement in 1:15cd: to repent *and* believe in the gospel. In this light, the words ‘the time is fulfilled’ carry the meaning that Jesus fulfills the work initiated by John.

3.6 The Fourth Phrase: ‘Believe in the Gospel’ (Mk 1:15d)

The final phrase of the mission statement is πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ, whereby Mark refers to belief in an εὐαγγέλιον. Mark’s ‘absolutizing’ of the εὐαγγέλιον is somewhat unique and thus highlights his understanding of what the εὐαγγέλιον is or should be. Matthew, for example, prefers the phrase ‘the gospel of the kingdom’ (4:23; 9:35; 24:14), while the only other NT author to apply εὐαγγέλιον in its absolute sense is Paul.⁴⁴ In Rom. 1.1 Paul states that he has been set apart for the ‘gospel of God’ concerning ‘his Son...who was declared to be Son of God with power...’ and in 15:16 he claims to be in priestly service to *it*. In 1 Thess. 2:8 Paul is able to bring *it* to others: ‘we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also ourselves’. Mark’s similar absolutizing of εὐαγγέλιον makes it possible for the gospel to be the *object* of

⁴⁴ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 173.

belief rather than simply the ‘good news’ about something.⁴⁵ For Mark, and also for Paul, it is the confession of Jesus as the Christ, who offers salvation to those who believe in him, that is the absolute εὐαγγέλιον.⁴⁶ Jesus is ‘descended from David according to the flesh and declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead...’ (Rom. 1:3, 4) and in Mark, ‘Jesus Christ, Son of God’ (Mk 1:1).

Mark’s Gospel is thus a thing (of itself) that must be believed in for a reader to escape judgment on the day of Ezekiel’s doom. What must be believed is that Jesus is the Messiah, as Mark presents it in 1:1. This is what Mark wants his readers to decide in favor of, that Jesus is the Son of God. Not only does Mark want his readers to believe this, but he expects them to do something about it, individually.⁴⁷ This may be contrasted with the late Second Temple Jewish perspective, which is also latent in John the Baptist’s preaching, whereby YHWH’s existence is assumed, though humans fail to obey him.⁴⁸ John’s rite was consistent with the prophetic traditions leading up to his time (Isa. 44:3; Ezek. 36:25-27; Joel 2:28-29; Zech. 13:1, 2), where YHWH offers restoration to those who will return to his instruction. In Mark, however, the theocentric character of Israel’s Scriptures is turned on its head as the evangelist calls for the individual believer to do something that will cause God to act on their behalf *personally*. In other words, for Mark, God must be validated by the believer. They must be the ones not only to repent but also to *believe*.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Telford, *Theology*, 4, explains that the literal translation of the Greek εὐαγγέλιον into the Old English *godspel* in normal usage meant *good news*, as in news of a battle won or a ruler enthroned. The expression was a favorite of Mark’s (1:1; 1:14-15; 8:35; 10:29; 13:10; 14:9) without expressing its specific content.

⁴⁶ Black, *Mark*, 46, points out that Paul’s writings were written before Mark’s Gospel, and that Mark’s Gospel was meant as a Christian message of salvation accomplished by Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection (Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 15:1; 2 Cor. 11:7; 1 Thess. 2:2, 8-9).

⁴⁷ See J.R. Donahue, ‘A Neglected Factor in the Gospel of Mark’, *JBL* 101.4 (1982), 594. Donahue refers to two Markan audiences – potential converts and existing believers: ‘Mark’s gospel, therefore, is directed to those who have been converted and believe in the gospel (1:15) but also reaches out to those who may be seeking the way of God in truth and therefore are not far from the kingdom of God.’

⁴⁸ A. Weiser, ‘πιστεῦω’, in G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1985), 849.

⁴⁹ See Tuckett, ‘Mark’, 888, who posits that Mark may have sought to change or mold his readers’ views of Christian discipleship.

Another observation regarding the Greek term εὐαγγέλιον is that it was not restricted to Christian use in Mark's time and that the evangelist may have meant for it to serve as a politically loaded term. The *good news* of Jesus as the Son of God may have presented an affront to the Roman authorities in Mark's own time.⁵⁰ Richard Hays notes an important inscription found at Priene in Asia Minor, dating from 9 BCE, that declares that the birthday of the god Augustus was the 'beginning of the good news – the εὐαγγέλιον – for the world, that came by reason of him'. Hays notes that for Mark to choose this term, as the keynote of his narrative, is to set up a clash between the kingdom of God and the Roman Empire, between Christians and the Roman authorities. He adds that both *Christos* and *God's Son* are designations for the anointed king of Israel, a claim that Hays says is underscored by Jesus' baptism when the heavenly voice addresses him as 'my son, in whom I am well pleased', which are words of royal proclamation drawn from the Jewish Scriptures (Ps. 2:7).⁵¹

A final consideration regarding Mark 1:15d is that the Greek word πιστεύετε denotes a personal rather than collective or corporate relationship with God, partly based on scriptural promises and partly in connection with the Christian mission and its call to believe in Jesus as *the Messiah*. The verb is used elsewhere in the NT for believing God's word through various sacred channels, such as Scripture (Jn 2:22), the prophets (Acts 26:27), Moses (Jn 5:46-47), an angel (Lk. 1:20) or John the Baptist (Mk 11:31). The implication with regard to Mark 1:15d is that Jesus' words should be taken with the same level of belief and trust as words originating from YHWH himself.⁵² Braun notes in this regard that the verb πιστεύω usually means 'to receive the message' but it may also denote 'to be believing', which he regards as equivalent to 'being Christian'.⁵³ In other words, belief in Jesus as the Christ is, according to Mark's Gospel, tantamount to *being a Christian*.⁵⁴ The mission statement is, then, a statement of overall Christian fidelity which combines two core

⁵⁰ Hays, *Echoes*, 92, contends that the term εὐαγγέλιον suggests a bold counterclaim to the propaganda of Pax Romana and the cult of the divine emperor.

⁵¹ Hays, *Echoes*, 92.

⁵² Tuckett, 'Mark', 853-854.

⁵³ Tuckett, 'Mark', 855.

⁵⁴ Tuckett, 'Mark', 855.

tenets: John's repentance for sins and belief in Jesus as the Christ.⁵⁵ Thus, the mission statement appears to have been crafted for a specifically Christian purpose, namely to unify believers under a single confession and rite.

⁵⁵ Marcus, *John the Baptist*, 63, notes that Josephus claimed (*Antiquities of the Jews*, XVIII: V, 2) that John's baptism did not impart the forgiveness of sins, since only true repentance could accomplish that. This agrees with Mark's view that John's rite was one of repentance (1:4) and that the people who came to John confessed their sins (1:5).

Chapter 4: The Rhetorical Purpose of Jesus' Mission Statement

4.1 Introduction

The textual analysis undertaken in the last chapter of this study has proposed that Mark crafted Jesus' mission statement with reference to the Jewish Scriptures (specifically, Ezekiel 7) and connected those Scriptures to new (Christian) ideas related to the Parousia of Jesus and to personal accountability based on repentance and belief in the gospel. As I have already suggested, Mark presents Jesus' mission in such a way as to encourage readers to decide to believe in the gospel, or else the doom of the eschaton, and all that it entails, will fall upon them as unrepentant non-believers.

In this chapter, I will examine how the mission statement acts as part of a rhetorical pattern in Mark's narration of the stories about Jesus. This is Mark's method of bringing readers to a decision about Jesus' true identity, based on what they encounter about him in these stories. The reason as to why Mark does this will be discussed later in the dissertation (Chapter 5), where Christian apocalyptic expectations around the time of the first Jewish-Roman War will be presented as the backdrop for Mark's imperative. There I will assert that Mark is at work pressing for a decision of his readers, and this because they are experiencing what Mark believes to be the end times: Jesus will arrive suddenly at his Parousia, which, as implied by Mark, will happen on the Day of the Lord.

To understand the interconnectivity of the mission statement, and how Mark uses it to summarize what Jesus' followers must do in the final hour, one must examine Mark's style of narration to appreciate the mechanics of his method. The 'good news' that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God is how Mark begins his gospel narrative (1:1). He transitions from his prologue, where he states what he wants – or expects - his readers to understand about Jesus' identity (1:1-13),¹ to the first of several summary statements about choosing to follow him, beginning in

¹ Tuckett, 'Mark', 885.

1:14 and recurring in the first half of the book until chapter eight (see 1:14-20; 3:7-19; 6:6-13; 8:27-29). A literary pattern can thus be observed whereby the author draws attention to a teaching on discipleship in which Jesus' true identity is clarified with the aid of narrative examples or illustrations.² This method is designed to orient readers to making a decision for themselves based on what others - that is, characters within the narrative - have decided about the subject.³ I agree with, and will further argue what Francis Moloney has proposed, that Mk 1:14-8:29 represents a literary unit dealing with the words and deeds of Jesus that are designed to prompt readers to ask: who is this man? He notes that the question is posed many times in Mk 1-8 (1:27, 45; 2:12; 3:22; 4:41; 5:20; 6:2, 3, 48-50; 7:37), with the correct answer provided at the end of this textual unit when Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ (8:29).

4.2 Mark's Narrative Cycle

The author employs a narrative cycle that some scholars have identified as a *concentric ring pattern*.⁴ Some of the information provided by Mark within these rings may not have previously been known to his readers; therefore, by disclosing new information (in stories about Jesus) through the narrative context, Mark helps readers come to a decision about believing in Jesus as the Messiah. Those who come to belief are then expected to become members of the Christian community through the rite of baptism.⁵ The pattern leads readers through various examples of how others have dealt with the question of Jesus' identity so that they can come to their own conclusions from the vantage point of those perspectives.⁶ The pattern reaches a climax in 8:27 where the Markan Jesus asks, 'Who do men say that I am?', and in 8:29, 'But who do you say that I am?', for which Peter gives the appropriate response that Mark hopes his readers will emulate:

² Moloney, *Gospel of Mark*, 16-18.

³ Moloney, *Gospel of Mark*, 16-18.

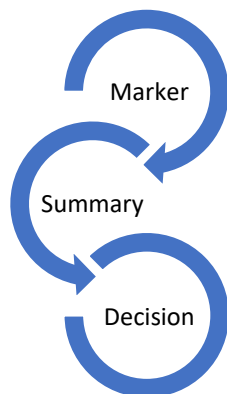
⁴ Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 89, 90. See also J. Dewey, 'Markan Public Debate: Literary Technique, Concentric Structure, and Theology in Mark 2:1—3:6', *SBLDS* 48 (1980), 206; and Malbon, *Mark's Jesus*, 34.

⁵ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 175.

⁶ N. Petersen, 'Point of View in Mark's Narrative', *Semeia* 12 (1978), 97-121. Petersen notes that another way to view the narrative pattern is to do so from the perspective of the key Markan characters, namely God, Jesus, the disciples and the Jewish leaders, all of whom operate within the narrative on two planes: the *identity plane* (their point of view about Jesus) and the *ideological plane* (their evaluative point of view). The viewpoints converge when the narrator establishes his points of view for the implied reader.

'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God'.⁷ Thus, the center or overall midpoint of Mark's Gospel occurs when Peter confesses in 8:29 what Mark has already asserted in 1:1.⁸ The pattern thus comes full circle.

The literary unit of chapters 1-8 can be seen as an overall ring of confession about Jesus' true identity, which contains smaller decision summaries that can be viewed as inner rings. Malbon notes in this respect, Mark begins his narrative by applying the title of 'Christ' to Jesus in the first chapter and, in Peter's confession, settles the matter once and for all for his audience at the end of the cycle. She posits further, and correctly in my view, that Mark's implied audience knows that Peter's answer conforms to the overarching point of view of his Gospel.⁹



An Example of Mark's Cyclical Decision Motif

1:15 - Marker: 'the time is fulfilled'

1:16-19 - Summary: 'Come, and I will make you fishers of men.'

1:20 - Decision: 'And they left their father in the boat and followed him.'

⁷ Moloney, *Gospel of Mark*, 16-18.

⁸ Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 90, asserts that Mark has a symmetrical structure. See also R. Pesch, *Naherwartungen: Tradition und Redaktion in Mk 13* (KBANT; Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1968), 50-73. According to Pesch's calculations, the center of Mark's Gospel is 8:27-30, the passage in which Peter acknowledges Jesus as the Christ. See also H.M. Benoit and G.M. Standaert, *L'Évangile selon Marc: Composition et genre littéraire* (Nijmegen: Stichting Studentenpers Nijmegen, 1978), 25-64, who view the Gospel of Mark concentrically and argue that the very center of the book is the passage extending from Jesus' question to the disciples about his identity in 8:27 through 9:13, which records the end of the discussion that takes place as they descend from the mountain of the Transfiguration.

⁹ Malbon, *Mark's Jesus*, 2.

It appears that Mark intends the pattern to work as a rhetorical mechanism leading his readers to confession and baptism.¹⁰ The summaries work in such a way that a reader may decide to exit any of the inner rings by expressing repentance, and by confessing that Jesus is the Christ, in accordance with Mark's Gospel (which may be confirmed by baptism, Mk 1:15cd). Dunn notes that, as in Acts (8:12-13, 38; 10:47-48; 16:15; 33; 18:8), baptism immediately proceeds from repentance and belief. It functions as the response to the proclaimed message as an expression of repentance and commitment rather than as the ratification of a decision made at an earlier date. Thus, the logical action following Mark's summary in 1:15cd, to repent and believe, would be for the reader to be baptized. If a reader, on the other hand, moves through the rings and does not come to belief, or is insufficiently strengthened in their belief under persecution, the narrative eventually turns dark in the second half of the Gospel (after Chapter 8), where there are dire consequences for unbelief and the failure to become baptized (9:42-50; 12:9; 16:16).¹¹ The reader would then ostensibly feel the weight of, as articulated by Ezekiel, that they may be found wanting on the Day of the Lord, having failed to accept YHWH's representative when given time and opportunity to do so.¹²

4.3 The Decision Motif

Jesus' mission statement (1:15), it is argued, was constructed to serve the author's rhetorical purpose of promoting discipleship with a call to action.¹³ There is an implied relationship between

¹⁰ J.D.G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Epworth Commentaries (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 1996), 34.

¹¹ Mark 16:16 is covered in greater detail in section 4.7 below. Mark 16:9-20 are not found in Codex Sinaiticus or Codex Vaticanus, though nearly all other manuscripts of Mark include these verses. Whether Mark wrote these verses, or they are additions to the text by another writer, has never been definitively established. See N.P. Lunn, *The Original Ending of Mark: A New Case For Authenticity of Mark 16:9-20* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Company, 2015); D.A. Black, D. Bock, K. Elliott, M. Robinson and D. Wallace, *Perspectives on the Ending of Mark - 4 Views* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2008); B.R. Gaventa and P.D. Miller (eds.), *The Ending of Mark, and the Ends of God: Essays in Memory of Donald Harrisville Juel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005) for arguments for and against the authenticity of the longer ending of Mark. I take the position that Mark 16:16 is probably authentic since it is consistent with the structure of the rest of his Gospel.

¹² This does not necessarily assume that Mark's Gospel served a missionary purpose. It will be shown later in the analysis that Mark had rhetorical and apocalyptic aims in writing his gospel and was appealing to existing as well as new believers to commit or re-commit to the Christian gospel by being baptized before the impending Parousia.

¹³ Moloney, *Gospel of Mark*, 16-18; cf. G.L. Cockerill, 'The Invitation-Structure and Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark', *Journal of Inductive Biblical Studies* 3/1 (2016), 28, who, regarding the structure of Mark, notes that it 'facilitates the Gospel's invitation to follow Jesus on the path of discipleship by identifying with those whom he calls.' He describes

Mark and his readers, one which communicates¹⁴ how the reader can move from belief to discipleship in Christian service. Mark carefully places markers in the literary unit which makes up the first half of his narrative (1:14, 15; 3:7-12; 6:6, 8:27)¹⁵ to alert his readers that something regarding discipleship is about to be explained to them, and highlighting examples of what others did with this information in regard to becoming disciples.¹⁶ The first marker in 1:14, 15 comes just before the call of the first disciples (1:16-20), culminating - as already noted above - in the response of those who decide to follow Jesus: they 'left their nets and followed him'. Moloney defines the pattern as: *summary-discipleship-narration-decision*,¹⁷ which I refer to in this study as Mark's decision motif:

1:15 Textual Marker: The time is fulfilled.

1:16-20 Summary: As he was going along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew cast a net.

Discipleship: Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

Narration: And they left their father in the boat and they followed Jesus.

Reader's Decision: Should I drop what I am doing and follow Jesus?¹⁸

Both Moloney and Hooker point to these summaries as textual markers used by Mark to initiate the decision cycle. I believe Hooker is correct in noting that the markers exist at the precise points where Mark has expressed a key theme.¹⁹ In 1:15, at least two of Mark's key themes are present:

the structure in four sections that follow the prologue (1:1-13), each of which begins with a significant interaction between Jesus and his disciples: 1:14–3:12 begins with the call of the first disciples; 3:13–6:6 with the appointment of the twelve; 6:7–8:21 with the sending of the twelve; and 8:22–10:52 with Jesus' questioning of the twelve about his identity. Each represents a new phase of discipleship.

¹⁴ S. Chapman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 147-150, defines *narrative* as communication between an implied author and implied reader. Malbon, *Mark's Jesus*, 7, points out that the term 'implied audience' is an important characteristic feature with reference to Mark, since the oral/aural context of his Gospel indicates that it was written in order to be heard.

¹⁵ N. Perrin, *The New Testament: An Introduction* (Chicago: Harcourt Press, 1974), 145-147, lists the summary markers, which he calls *transitional summaries*, as those found in Mk 1:14-15, 3:7-12 and 6.6. See also J. Dewey, 'Mark as Interwoven Tapestry: Forecasts and Echoes for a Listening Audience', *CBQ* 53.2 (1991), 221-36.

¹⁶ Moloney, *Gospel of Mark*, 16. See also T.J. Gedert, *Watchwords: Mark 13 in Markan Eschatology* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2015, first published in 1989), 44-45. Gedert calls attention to the Markan Jesus using these summaries to replace those who reject him, vis-a-vis the Jewish authorities, which is part of Mark's method of recruitment and instruction.

¹⁷ Moloney, *Gospel of Mark*, 28.

¹⁸ Adapted from Moloney, *Gospel of Mark*, 21.

¹⁹ Hooker, *Saint Mark*, 11.

discipleship and *Jesus' true identity*. As the gospel narrative develops, one can identify these themes retrospectively in the gospel's opening sections. Thus, the cumulative and sequential impact will be felt at the end of the cycle, and, by the end, the author's narrative themes will be fully developed.²⁰

4.4 The Purpose of Mark's Decision Motif

Mark's method of cycling his readers through his decision motif appears designed to confirm them in Christian belief and service. It is therefore likely that he worked with material from existing early Christian traditions with which he and (at least some of) his readers may have shared some familiarity. Although Mark's sources cannot be known absolutely, his use of the Jewish Scriptures can be determined with a high degree of confidence. It may be said beyond this that it is probable that the author collaborated with those inside the early Christian community and that he expressed and supported their shared traditions. Yarbro Collins notes that scholars describe Mark as a collector of Christian traditions shaped by the needs of the early Church.²¹ Telford likewise finds that behind Mark lies a community and behind the community lies the tradition. Telford believes that the Markan material had a pre-history. Sayings and stories about Jesus had been circulating for a generation in various Jewish and Gentile-Christian communities before they were subjected to sustained literary and theological interpretation.²²

²⁰ See Telford, *Theology*, 23 where he notes that increasing attention has been paid to recurrent themes, motifs, or interests within the Gospel (of Mark) and a growing recognition accorded to those features, both literary and theological, that give the Markan text its unity and progression. He notes that coherence is maintained in the gospel's style, in its literary techniques and rhetorical devices, for example its consistent demonstration of linear and concentric patterning.

²¹ Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 1.

²² Telford, *Theology*, 16-18, distinguishes the Markan community from *specifically* readers or auditors, in that they share 'parenetic, catechetical and polemical characteristics...e.g., political questions concerning leadership and discipleship; legal and cultic issues concerning the sabbath, purity, fasting, table fellowship; social issues concerning marriage and divorce, poverty and riches; doctrinal issues concerning the authority and status of Jesus, the Kingdom of God, the coming age, resurrection etc. The mood engendered or atmosphere created by the author facilitates the apocalyptic overtones and the eschatological urgency, the references to suffering and the hints of persecution, real or anticipated. All these suggest a 'community' rather than simply a 'readership', which faces a common threat, is in tension with its Jewish heritage, is oppressed, possibly persecuted, is in need of moral guidance, sees Jesus as a paradigm for its faith and expects a speedy resolution of its problems. Features such as these are not sufficient, of course, to provide a definitive clue to the identity of the Markan community, this, like the Gospel's provenance, still remains an open question.'

This is important in regard to the research question underpinning this particular dissertation, as Mark's rhetorical goal of committing or perhaps even re-committing his readers to Christian discipleship by encouraging them to undertake Christian baptism seems to have meaning beyond a simple mission focus for the sake of evangelism. He is intent upon connecting the Day of the Lord to the baptismal rite for other reasons, using allusions to the Jewish Scriptures for that purpose. He also seems to consult sources regarding the baptismal rite as somehow connected to Israel's restoration, which will be examined in the next section 4.5 below. From the perspective of his sources, it may be possible to include the writings of Paul and some descriptions of early Christian baptism as attested in the Book of Acts. I am proposing that Mark used existing Christian sources along with the Jewish Scriptures to construct Jesus' mission statement (1:15), and this for a specific Christian purpose, which I will now examine in greater detail.

4.5 The Mission Statement as an Originally Intended Baptismal Formula

The mission statement can be interpreted as providing a tacit endorsement of Christian baptism, as it closely parallels early Christian baptismal formulae found elsewhere in the NT (cf. Rom. 3:12; 1 Thess. 5:5, 6; Col. 1:13; Acts 2:38; 3:20, 21; 26:18).²³ That Christians were baptizing adherents with intention beyond John's simple baptism of water and repentance is supported by Dunn, among other scholars. Dunn observes that 'there is no reason whatsoever to doubt that John's baptism was transformed into Christian baptism at the very beginning of the movement'.²⁴

That Mark placed such credal statements on the lips of Jesus may demonstrate that he intended to lend them extra weight. Dennis Nineham asserts, in this regard, that first-generation leaders of the early Church put their thumbs on the scale of the new gospel genre to influence it for the Christian cause.²⁵ Wassén and Hägerland hold a similar view when they claim that 'Jesus stood

²³ Though the Book of Acts was written by Luke, perhaps a decade or two after the composition of Mark, the early *baptismal formulae* and events that Luke records in Acts, such as the first public Christian baptism in 2:38, may accurately reflect an early tradition that pre-dates Mark.

²⁴ Dunn, *Acts*, 33.

²⁵ D.E. Nineham, *The Gospel of Saint Mark* (Louisville: Westminster Press, 1977), cited by Hooker, *Saint Mark*, 2. See also Malbon, *Mark's Jesus*, 3, where she notes that Mark's Gospel needs to be carefully sifted and subjected to additional tests of historicity.

as a great authority figure for the Christ-believers who transmitted and wrote down the traditions about him, the idea of putting their own beliefs into his mouth naturally presented itself. By this means, their ideas could appear to bear the ultimate endorsement'.²⁶ Thus, the mission statement in Mk 1:15 may have been crafted in such a way as to present it as a creed of Christian discipleship, from baptism onwards, where repentance and confession of belief in the Christian gospel define its essential starting-point.

Though Mark may have crafted the statement to be proclaimed by Jesus, it seems unlikely that he would have made up words for Jesus out of whole cloth for the sole purpose of promoting baptism. The practice of baptism had already been established by John the Baptist - a rite to which Jesus himself seems to have submitted. As Morna Hooker puts it, 'While we believe that Mark was an evangelist, and that he selected and arranged his material to proclaim the significance of Jesus to the community of his day, we do not think that the fact that Mark addressed his gospel to the needs of his readers, means that he had no interest in history. It remains unlikely that he created the material *ex nihilo*'.²⁷

One possible reason that Mark may have added credal statements to the mission statement has been argued effectively by Joel Marcus, that by depicting Jesus as the founder of Christian baptism, Mark may have been defending the practice against those who opposed it, namely the followers of John the Baptist. Marcus argues that a competition between the followers of John the Baptist and the followers of Jesus existed before the commencement of Jesus' Galilean ministry, which had much to do with how Christian believers established their first rites and traditions.²⁸ He attributes the *competition hypothesis*, and the polemic against the overvaluing of John the Baptist, to William Baldensperger in the nineteenth century who, on the basis of the prologue to the Fourth Gospel, demonstrated where the polemic is arguably most evident.²⁹

²⁶ Wassén and Hägerland, *Apocalyptic Prophet*, 79.

²⁷ Hooker, *Saint Mark*, 2-5.

²⁸ Marcus, *John the Baptist*, 27, 67. See also Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 1, where she notes that the Gospel of Mark is regarded by form critics as a collection of early Christian traditions shaped by the views of the early Church.

²⁹ W. Baldensperger, *Prolog des vierten Evangeliums* (Freiburg: J.C.B. Mohr, 1898).

Marcus traces the polemic through the Synoptic Gospels, the Pseudo-Clementine literature and Mandaean texts, to conclude that ‘competition between early Christians and the followers of John the Baptist is evident throughout the early Christian sources’.³⁰ Marcus points to Acts 18-19, especially 18:24-26 and 19:1-7, as well as Luke 1 where he believes that the Lukan evangelist is extending a hand of reconciliation to the followers of the Baptist, in that John is depicted as having the Holy Spirit in his mother’s womb before Jesus was alive to impart it to him as a gift. Marcus shows that this sort of tension also exists in Matthew (especially 3:14, 15), where he claims that the polemic was directed at the followers of the Baptist, who insisted that John was superior to Jesus because he baptized him, and not the other way around. Marcus provides strong cumulative evidence from the NT gospels that in the latter part of the first century CE the Baptist movement was a troublesome competitor, whose claims needed to be countered by the early Christian movement.³¹

The competition between the followers of John and the followers of Jesus flowed over into the post-Easter period of the early Church, and some of the contested issues involved the authority and exclusivity of John’s baptism in comparison to claims regarding Christian baptism.³² Marcus notes in this respect that ‘we must constantly remember what Christians wanted to believe about John the Baptist, namely, that his most important task was to prepare the way for Jesus, not to claim salvific importance for himself, and when we encounter texts that seem to mirror that belief, we must be vigilant’.³³ He considers Mark to have been a creative shaper of inherited Christian traditions, both inspired and constrained by those handed down to him.³⁴

4.6 The Baptismal Tradition of the Early Church

As mentioned earlier in the dissertation, Mark presents John the Baptist as the original baptizer, the one who baptized with water for the repentance of sins (1:4), and who spoke of another ‘one

³⁰ Marcus, *John the Baptist*, 26.

³¹ Marcus, *John the Baptist*, 13.

³² Marcus, *John the Baptist*, 11-26.

³³ Marcus, *John the Baptist*, 26.

³⁴ Telford, *Theology*, 19. Telford explains that the diversity of the content of Mark’s Gospel shows that it is a compilation of many sources and not the edited version of a single source.

mightier than I' (1:7) coming after him, who would initiate *another* baptism, one of the Holy Spirit (1:8). Mark implies that John's baptism would be subsumed under that of the *Mightier One*. In this respect Mark appears to combine the significance of the two baptisms in 1:15c and 1:15d, where *repentance* (John's rite) is conjoined with *belief* (Jesus' rite) to form a single credal statement under Jesus' sole authority. Thus, the mission statement, along with the other baptismal formulae mentioned at the beginning of this section, reflect the baptismal tradition of the early Church, namely that Christians are baptized into a singular rite that includes repentance and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.³⁵

Marcus further posits that the early Church distorted history when they made John's ministry exclusively anticipatory of Jesus. He notes that the identity of Jesus was still a question in John's mind at the time of his death (e.g., Lk. 7:18-35). He believes that Christian believers added the salvific elements of their theology to John's original practice, appropriating it for their own use, making it conform to the theological belief that Jesus was the Christ who overcame death, and in so doing energized the rite with salvific power. This, claims Marcus, was unlikely to have been the view of John and his adherents at the time of his baptismal ministry, which included Jesus as one of its recipients and possibly as one of John's followers. After the deaths of both John and Jesus, Christian believers began to place John in 'the old age', as the last of Israel's prophets, and to cast Jesus as the beginning of 'the new age' of the gospel. The polemic against John, and indirectly against his followers, increasingly presents the Baptist as an (inferior) precursor to Jesus. The polemic against John as an equal of or even mentor to Jesus is hinted at throughout the canonical gospels and is most explicit in the Fourth Gospel where the polemic against the Baptist's overvaluation is present from the very start.³⁶

There is ample evidence, both in the writings of Paul and in the speeches in Acts, that the early Church, prior to Mark, had already combined the two baptisms – of repentance and belief - into a single rite. It is Mark, however, who first attributes the declaration of a unified baptism to Jesus

³⁵ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 25. See also J. Meier, *Jesus: A Marginal Jew* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 53-56.

³⁶ Marcus, *John the Baptist*, 113-16.

himself. In doing so, Mark contends that the source of the combined rite is Jesus, and that John anticipated this and was therefore in full agreement with it.³⁷ If Marcus is correct, and the competition of followers existed before Jesus began his Galilean ministry,³⁸ then the inclusion of the familiar Baptist refrain,³⁹ 'repent', with the final phrase, 'believe in the gospel', may represent the effort of the early Church to baptize adherents into a unified community who confess belief, *exclusively*, in Jesus.⁴⁰ Mark may have felt that this was part of the imperative to unify believers under Jesus in the lateness of the hour, prior to the Parousia (13:5-6, 22, 27, 36).

Marcus highlights the similarity of the mission statement to other baptismal formulae in the NT, most of which pre-date Mark as:⁴¹

An announcement of the old age; 2) an announcement of the new age; 3) a call to turn away from the old age; and 4) a call to turn towards the new age.⁴²

Dunn has proposed a similar formulaic pattern:

1) Preaching climaxes in, 2) a call for repentance, that 3) results in baptism, and 4) the Holy Spirit is given.⁴³

In the light of this, it may be reasonably concluded that the mission statement in Mark 1:15 is thematically consistent with the existing baptismal formulae of the early Church and contains similar content.

³⁷ Wassén and Hägerland, *Apocalyptic Prophet*, 87. The authors note that the disciples of John the Baptist continued to baptize long after John's death, citing Acts 19:1-7.

³⁸ Marcus, *John the Baptist*, 27.

³⁹ D.C. Allison, 'A Plea for Thoroughgoing Eschatology', *JBL* 113/4 (1994), 654.

⁴⁰ Marcus, *John the Baptist*, 63. Marcus claims that John the Baptist's rite was regarded by Mark as 'a baptism of repentance' (1:4), and that Matthew, Luke and Josephus all confirm that repentance was part of the baptismal gestalt.

⁴¹ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 174.

⁴² Marcus, *John the Baptist*, 63.

⁴³ Dunn, *Acts*, 32.

Marcus has catalogued the baptismal formulae into the following table:

Mark 1:15	Romans 13:12	1 Thessalonians 5:5-6	Colossians 1:13	Acts 26:18
the time has been fulfilled (ὅτι πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς)	the night is far gone (ἡ νύξ προέκοψεν)	you are children of the light and day (ὕμεῖς υἱοὶ φωτός ἐστε καὶ υἱοὶ ἡμέρας)	has rescued us from the power of darkness (ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκότους)	
and the kingdom of God draws near (καὶ ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ)	and day has drawn near (ἡ δὲ ἡμέρα ἤγγικεν.)	we are not of night or darkness (Οὐκ ἐσμὲν νυκτὸς οὐδὲ σκότους)	transferred us into the dominion of the beloved son (μετέστησεν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ)	
repent (μετανοεῖτε)	let us put off the works of darkness (ἀποθώμεθα οὖν τὰ ἔργα τοῦ σκότους)	let us not sleep like others (μὴ καθεύδωμεν ὡς οἱ λοιποὶ)		to turn from darkness to the light (τοῦ ἐπιστρέψαι ἀπὸ σκότους εἰς φῶς)
and believe in the gospel (καὶ πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ)	let us put on the weapons of light (ἐνδυσώμεθα δὲ τὰ ὄπλα τοῦ φωτός)	let us wake up and be sober (γρηγορῶμεν καὶ νήφωμεν)		from the power of Satan to God (τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ Σατανᾶ ἐπὶ τὸν Θεόν)

Two significant speeches by Peter in Acts, not included in Marcus' table, provide additional support for this contention. They include an element of Christian conversion, personal salvation, an intimation of the Abrahamic promise, and a reference to the times of restoration spoken of by the prophets in the past:

Repent (Μετανοήσατε) and be baptized (βαπτισθήτω), every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins (εἰς ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ὑμῶν), and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you, and to your children and to all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call. (Acts 2:38, 39)

Repent (μετανοήσατε), and therefore be converted, that your sins may be blotted out (τὸ ἐξαιρεθῆναι ὑμῶν τὰς ἀμαρτίας), so that the times (καιροὶ) of refreshing (ἀναψύξεως) may come (ἔλθωσιν) from the presence of the Lord (ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ Κυρίου), and that he may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times (χρόνων) of the restoration (ἀποκαταστάσεως) of all things, which God has spoken from the mouth of the prophets, since the world began. (Acts 3:19-21)

These speeches in Acts,⁴⁴ which Luke may have reinterpreted from his own sources (perhaps including Mark 1:15), appear to reflect an early tradition of a unified Christian baptism, where the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (John the Baptist's) has been joined with the impartation of the Holy Spirit (Jesus', as the one who baptizes with the Spirit).⁴⁵ There are stark similarities between Acts 3:19-21 and Mark 1:15, where both allude to the prophetic past in what 'was preached to you before' and 'the restoration of all things' with 'the time has been fulfilled'. These appear to be allusions to existing Jewish eschatological expectations which have been re-interpreted in the context of Christian baptism.

Restoration was a central component of the Jewish eschatological expectation of reward for Israel's repentance of sins.⁴⁶ According to what some scholars, like R.P. Carroll, call 'the pattern of exile and repentance', the 'time of refreshing' in Acts would appear to reflect the conviction of the early Church that belief in Jesus (Mk 1:15d), as the Messiah (1:1), will provide the antidote for Israel's unbelief and that, as a result, it meets the necessary requirement for restoration.

⁴⁴ L.T. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), 57, explains that in Acts the imparting of the Holy Spirit did not always coincide with water baptism. It sometimes came before baptism, with the laying on of hands (Acts 8:15-17; 19:6).

⁴⁵ Dunn, *Acts*, 43, observes that the New Testament contains no unbaptized believer and notes that the elements of Christian salvation build up from John's baptism into Jesus' imparting the Spirit. He also says that the earliest Christians developed the formula which included the Pentecostal baptism into a three-part formula, which can be seen not only in baptismal formulae, but also in the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19).

⁴⁶ R.P. Carroll, 'Exile, Restoration and Colony: Judah in the Persian Empire', in L.G. Perdue (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 103, 104. Carroll observes, 'Thus we may read the Hebrew Bible from beginning to end, as a series of narratives, tales and depictions of deportation and displacement...these stories represent various deportations of Israel and Judah under the hegemonic rules of Assyria and Babylon, thus providing the narrative pattern and data for the construction of the topic of 'exile and restoration' in the context of imperial rule. The pattern of social movement seems fairly fixed in the biblical narratives, but only the material in Kings and the Prophets contributes to the more focused imperial deportation pattern of invasive overthrow, followed by deportation, with the potential for return and restoration to the imagined former state.'

Dunn notes that there is a tension in Acts 2:39 of the 'promise' regarding the self-definition of the new Jesus movement. He claims that there is here a reverse echo of the ancient covenantal threat formula (Exod. 20:5; 34:7), which implies the promise of the covenant to successive generations of Israel. However, the ambiguity of the third phrase, 'and to all that are far off' (cf. Isa. 57:19; Joel 2:32), may deliberately embrace the thought of both the return of exiled Israel and of foreigners responding to Israel's message (cf. Deut. 30:1-6; Isa. 56:3-8). In which case, the thought hangs between the restoration of Israel and the bringing in of the Gentiles.⁴⁷ Thus, the 'time is fulfilled' (Mk 1:15a) aligns with 'the time of refreshing' and the declaration that 'the kingdom of God draws near' (1:15b) with the 'restoration of all things'. The failure of Israel to anoint Jesus as their king and messiah opened the door to Christian baptism, whereby Christians could effectively reenact Jesus' own baptism and symbolically accept him as the Messiah, as the Jews had chosen not to do. They may have felt that in so doing the kingdom could proceed, and that Jesus would return to enact it, coming for his elect at his Parousia.

The baptismal formulae demonstrate that Mark 1:15 is consistent with the Christian traditions of Mark's time, especially if we consider that Peter's words as recorded by Luke in Acts (2:38; 3:19-21) may predate Mark and stem from an early tradition. It is likely, then, that the elements of the mission statement in Mark 1:15 are in fact *pre-Markan* and that Mark had only to place them into his own rhetorical framework and chronology.⁴⁸ Mark appears to have been working entirely within the bounds of his sources, and the active Christian ingredients in Mark 1:15 can be accounted for in the existing baptismal formulae. Marcus concludes that the mission statement in Mark 1:15 contains, in all likelihood, the very words that Christians recited on the occasion of baptism.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Dunn, *Acts*, 33.

⁴⁸ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 174, claims that Mk 1:15 is pre-Markan because some aspects of the statement are historical while the rest of it reflects an early baptismal formula that was used by the early Church, possibly *verbatim*, before the writing of Mark. I come to the similar conclusion, contending however, that what Marcus refers to as 'historical' phrases (Mk 1:15ab), are actually allusions to the Jewish Scriptures, using Ezekiel 7 and Daniel 7 as sources, that Mark has placed on the lips of Jesus.

⁴⁹ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 176.

That the Church became the dispenser of the Holy Spirit, by way of inheriting the baptismal rite, made the use of the name and title of Jesus the ultimate baptismal authority, which is an important distinction. This may have been a primary reason for Mark to frame the mission statement as Jesus' own declaration. Dunn notes that when the authority of Jesus began to be expressed in early Christian baptisms, 'in the name of Jesus Christ' (cf. Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5), it became the defining mark of the new movement, beyond the baptism of John, and placed the authority of Jesus over all newly baptized Christians.⁵⁰

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the plea of the mission statement, to repent and believe in the gospel, comes with an implied 'or else', of consequences for non-compliance, namely that those in the community who are not baptized will not only face doom and other consequences (9:42-50; 12:9), but will also face condemnation (16:16). Thus, there is an effort by the author not only to summarize baptism as a unified rite, endorsed by the Markan Jesus himself, but also to present it as the antidote for something of a curse that presents dangers to the soul, in this life and the next. Readers making it all the way to the end of Mark's narrative cycle are confronted with a clear ultimatum: to believe and be baptized or face condemnation, 'The one who believes *and is baptized* will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned' (16:16). This is a connection to the mission statement that is frequently overlooked by scholars who insist that the longer ending of Mark is inauthentic, which I will now consider.

4.7 Condemnation for the Unbaptized

The two oldest manuscripts of Mark (Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus) end abruptly at 16:8, and do not contain those verses belonging to the longer ending (vv. 9-20), though a majority of Markan manuscripts do in fact contain them. This has been at the heart of a controversy in critical scholarship that began after these manuscripts were discovered at the end of the nineteenth century. Some scholars, including B.F. Westcott and F.J.A. Hort, advocated that the 'longer ending' must have been added to Mark sometime in the second century and should not therefore be considered authentic. This theory gained support in scholarly circles into the twentieth

⁵⁰ Dunn, *Acts*, 32.

century, until it was suggested by R.H. Lightfoot⁵¹ that Mark would not have ended his narrative abruptly with the Greek participle γάρ ('for'). Several important scholars joined Lightfoot in rejecting the shorter ending theory, and by the late 1980s it became the prevailing view, supported by influential scholars like Raymond Brown, James Dunn, Paul Achtemeier and Morna Hooker.

Twentieth century scholarship thus began and ended with a firm consensus about the ending of the Gospel, a consensus, however, which flipped 180 degrees in the latter half of the century. The change was gradual, but in retrospect, remarkable, so much so that persons trained in the last two decades who have not deliberately ventured into the terrain of pre-1970 Markan scholarship, might be unaware of the monolithic support once enjoyed by what is now a minority position.⁵²

Nicholas Lunn argues persuasively that the longer ending is more plausible for a number of reasons, including the fact that patristic writers quote from it. Irenaeus in 175 CE, for example, quotes from Mark 16:19 and there are essentially no writers since then who have mentioned the idea of a shorter ending until recent times, after the discovery of the two manuscripts mentioned above.

Lunn notes that the resurrection of Jesus could not possibly have been left out of Mark's Gospel, since Mark refers to it repeatedly within his narrative (8:31, 9:9, 10, 31, 10:34), and all of the other Synoptic Gospels have resurrection appearances and otherwise agree with Mark in structure in every other regard (death, burial, tomb). Of particular interest to me is that Lunn believes that the end of Mark should agree with the beginning of Mark, and not end abruptly as it would if 16:8 was the final verse of the narrative. Lunn makes an important observation, namely, that Mark would have been mindful of his rhetorical structure that he had carefully established in the entirety of his narrative before 16:8. He would therefore not have abandoned his effort to maintain the creed-like formulas that he was so careful to reinforce, including those

⁵¹ Lunn, *Original Ending*, 2.

⁵² N.C. Croy, *The Mutilation of Mark's Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 28.

of Christian confession and resurrection, which in Mark are consistent with the early speeches in Acts.⁵³

If Mk 16:16 is in fact original to Mark, which I believe it is, then it provides confirmation that the ‘or else’ threat implied in the mission statement relates directly to baptism. This mission statement thus directs Ezekiel’s doom firmly at the unrepentant non-believer. It makes clear what Mark expects in regard to his call to action: to repent and believe in the gospel. Mark expects his readers to be baptized. Thus, in 16:16, Mark can be seen to be completing the widest sweep of his narrative cycle to finish his Gospel in the same way in which he started, holding readers to a creed-like baptismal formula that ensures their confession of Jesus’ true identity (1:1), thus preparing them for the Parousia and kingdom of God.

4.8 Could the Mission Statement Have Originated with the Historical Jesus?

Though I have been arguing that Mark crafted the mission statement and put it on the lips of Jesus, it is still within the realm of possibility that it contains the resonance of a cultural memory of Jesus’ original teaching. If this is true, or even plausible, then that resonance would appear in the first two phrases, 1:15ab, and relate to the Jewish eschatological expectation of the time in which Jesus spoke, c. 30 CE. It is certain that Jesus was an historical figure, and that he conducted a ministry in and around Galilee. What we cannot know, however, is what he may have *actually said* about his ministry, with only the NT sources to work with. Though I concur with Le Donne and Keith that authenticity criteria should be treated with skepticism, some scholars have intimated that a hint of the memory of the historical Jesus may be latent within the mission statement, which I will now proceed to summarize and assess.

Both Morna Hooker and Adela Yarbro Collins have noted that certain elements within the mission statement appear to refer to different time periods and circumstances. According to Hooker, Mark appears to present only a fragment of what would plausibly have been Jesus’ original statement regarding his mission, while other elements in the statement appear to be Markan

⁵³ Lunn, *Original Ending*, 6-18.

additions.⁵⁴ She has argued that Mark 1:15 is probably a consolidation of Jesus' wider teaching regarding his Galilean mission.⁵⁵ In her view, Mark's summation is far too succinct a treatment of Jesus' teaching on the subject of his ministry and must, as a result, be considered as no more than a Markan summary of his historical teaching. She remarks: 'Jesus himself must have spelt out his message at much greater length than this, which means that this succinct account may be either Mark's own summary, or one that had been handed down to him.' Hooker believes that Jesus' original teaching would have focused on the kingdom of God (Mk 1:14), not on repentance and belief, making the second set of phrases (1:15c and 1:15d) less likely to have been part of his own teaching. In other words, for Hooker, Mark 1:15cd cannot be historical. She notes that the theme of proclaiming the 'gospel' reappears in Jesus' teaching later in Mark's narrative, as it does throughout the Synoptics. This, she believes, demonstrates that Jesus was interested, early in his career, in announcing the arrival of the kingdom rather than in promoting the salvific aspects of his own identity and role. Thus, the good news that Jesus spoke of in 1:14 is *from* God, in the subjective genitive case (τοῦ Θεοῦ), regarding the time being fulfilled. Therefore, it is not *about* God, objectively speaking, announcing that Jesus is the Son of God (cf. 1:1). The good news that Jesus came proclaiming was not *about God's* divine identity and salvific importance; it was rather *from God*, declaring that something had occurred which reflects the nearness of the kingdom of God. Hooker emphasizes that the good news of which Jesus spoke relates to the first phrase, ὅτι πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς (1:15a). She also intimates that the call to repent (1:15c) and believe (1:15d) represents a (later) Christian theme, which 'reminds us of the preaching of the Church (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 15:7) and is addressed to all who hear or read it'. According to Hooker's analysis, Mark seems to have purposefully conflated the good news about Jesus being the Christ with that of the fulfillment of time. She concludes that Mark 1:15cd did not originate with the historical Jesus; 'the words may well reflect the language of Mark rather than language of Jesus'.⁵⁶ The

⁵⁴ Hooker, *St. Mark*, 53. It is the similarity of 'repent and believe' to statements in Acts (2:38; 3:19; 15:7), addressed to all who hear and read, that gives Hooker pause that the mission statement can be attributed to the historical Jesus. She finds the language to be much like 'the preaching of the Church'. She also finds the frequent use of the *good news* in different contexts as evidence that it is Mark who uses these terms rather than Jesus'.

⁵⁵ Hooker, *St. Mark*, 53.

⁵⁶ Hooker, *St. Mark*, 53, points to the stark and obvious anachronistic aspect of the final phrase of the mission statement (see section 2.4 above) in particular the call to believe in the gospel, as a refined message of salvation, as had been developed by Paul and the early Church, after the death of Jesus.

implication of this, that I take from Hooker's point of view, is that the first two phrases (1:15ab) *may* reflect a resonance of the historical Jesus, but the second two phrases (1:15cd) definitely do not.

Though Hooker intimates that the first two phrases of the mission statement may indeed be historical, she does not provide any real method for arriving at this conclusion, nor does she endorse the idea that critical methods of authenticity can be effectively applied to the Markan text. Her warnings of taking the authenticity criteria too far are well known. Thus, her view of the possibility of discovering historical material latent within the mission statement is intriguing but it is not particularly useful in answering the question of authenticity. Hooker seems to feel that something historical may be going on in 1:15ab, but she does not provide a method for examining that possibility, at least in terms of historical authenticity.

Adela Yarbro Collins appears to agree with Morna Hooker's assessment that the two sets of phrases come from different settings or sources, and she provides some very interesting analysis in regard to the possible historical aspects of 1:15ab. She describes the Second Temple Jewish eschatological expectations that may have contributed to it. Yarbro Collins asserts that ὅτι πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς (1:15a) points to the fulfillment of a specific time period, with allusions to themes that are consistent with the Melchizedek Scroll (11QMelch 2, 4Q385) and the Book of Daniel (Chs. 7-9). She argues that the time, ὁ καιρὸς in 1:15a, may be a reference to the era of Jewish punishment for their transgressions against YHWH.⁵⁷ She notes that the phrasing is consistent with Jewish eschatological expectations before and during the time of Jesus, when the coming of the Messiah was believed to be initiated by Elijah's return (Mal. 3:1; 4:5) and when the captives of Israel would be released (Isa. 61; cf. Lk. 4:17-19). Like the proclamation in Mark 1:15a, the fulfillment of the *Day of Salvation* in the Melchizedek Scroll (11QMelch 2:15, 16; cf. Isa. 49:8) was expected at *the end of days* and was associated with *the kingship of God*.⁵⁸ The announcement of the fulfillment of time in Mark 1:15a is thus analogous to the argument made

⁵⁷ Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 154, 155.

⁵⁸ Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 155.

in the Melchizedek Scroll. Yarbrow Collins further posits that Mark's 'time is fulfilled' and the Melchizedek Scroll's 'end of days' both coincide with the *end of the tenth jubilee* (11QMelch 2:4, 7).⁵⁹ She notes that the phrase 'the end of days' represents 'a period of separation and affliction for the pious, a time of temptation and suffering in which the community had to stand the test'. For Yarbrow Collins, then, the moment of restoration is when the kingdom will come. Conversely, she believes that the second set of phrases (1:15cd) do not comfortably comport to the same contextual and eschatological setting as the first (1:15ab).

Yarbrow Collins' analysis is interesting and insightful; however, like Hooker, she does not address the question of whether or not any part of the mission statement can definitively be traced back to the historical Jesus or whether the consistencies with the Jewish eschatological expectations and writings that she has identified, were leveraged by Mark in his construction of the mission statement. I find her linkage of the first part of the statement to the eschatological expectations of the time of Jesus to be compelling but not certain in terms of the primary source. If Jesus was responsible for 1:15ab, then he may have seen himself in the role of Messiah bringing about the restoration to Israel, perhaps believing Israel would seize the decisive moment (*καίρος*) of fulfillment, in YHWH's economy, at the end of the tenth Jubilee, to initiate the kingdom of God which would then ensue under his leadership. While this possibility is tantalizing, neither Hooker nor Yarbrow Collins can deliver that prospect absolutely, at least in regard to attributing 1:15ab to Jesus himself.

What I think can be taken in respect to both scholars mentioned here, is that the Jewish eschatological expectation that they refer to was well known to the early Church and became embedded in their traditions. In Mark's time, the author likely began to adapt the Jewish eschatological expectations into *Christian apocalyptic* ones, after the death of Jesus, affording to the delay of 30 years of his Parousia. These factors, along with the ongoing war with the Romans, best explains 1:15ab, and Mark's appropriation of Ezekiel 7 as the framework for the mission statement, rather than the idea that he was quoting the historical Jesus. As will be articulated

⁵⁹ Yarbrow Collins, *Mark*, 154, 155.

further in my analysis, Mark is not quoting Jesus in 1:15ab; but is alluding to Ezekiel and conflating it with Daniel 7:13, which he adapts to his idea that the Parousia of Jesus will come on the Day of the Lord, when the kingdom of God shall arrive. Both Hooker and Yarbro Collins are right to note the differences between 1:15ab and 1:15cd, but the difference it seems, can be explained best in light of Mark's rhetorical goals than to fragments of resonating memory of what the historical Jesus may once have said.

Some scholars have contended that no element in the mission statement of Jesus may be considered historical, based on their view of the transmission of the text. John Dominic Crossan and members of the Jesus Seminar have advocated that apocalyptic statements cannot be reliably traced to the historical Jesus, because they claim that Jesus did not speak apocalyptically at all.⁶⁰ These scholars maintain that the references to repentance and to the kingdom of God being at hand (1:15bc) must have been borrowed from the preaching of John the Baptist, or were early Christian interpretations already present in Mark's sources.⁶¹ They assert that a layer of apocalypticism was imposed upon the early sources, namely Q and other hypothetical sources similar to the *Gospel of Thomas*, during the time when an oral tradition was first being committed to writing. The view of Crossan, and his colleagues from the Jesus Seminar, regarding the layering of Mark's Gospel is interesting but depends on many assumptions regarding hypothetical texts which have never been discovered. Thus, it is somewhat less direct and compelling as a result

⁶⁰ This was the consensus of seventy scholars belonging to the Jesus Seminar in 1993, published by R.W. Funk, R.W. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels* (New York: Macmillan Press, 1993). Several members have published independent works about Jesus' non-apocalypticism, including J.D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991); M. Borg, *Jesus a New Vision: Spirit, Culture, and the Life of Discipleship* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991); and S. Patterson, *The God of Jesus* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International), 1998.

⁶¹ Funk and Hoover, *The Five Gospels*, 41. See also D.C. Allison, M.J. Borg, J.D. Crossan, S.J. Patterson, in R.J. Miller (ed.), *The Apocalyptic Jesus* (Santa Rosa: Polebridge Press, 2001), 51, 52, where Crossan says that the apocalyptic stratum beginning in the pre-Markan era (30-70 CE) has mostly to do with the apocalyptic preaching of John the Baptist and he notes that the emphasis on the apocalyptic developments in the subsequent gospel traditions were originally wisdom sayings and parables of the historical Jesus. See also S.J. Patterson, in the same volume, on page 145, '...in the case of Jesus' parables (a wisdom form), we can see very clearly that many of them have been secondarily pressed in an apocalyptic direction, through the technique of allegorization. Here there is clearly development, but not from apocalyptic to wisdom. Rather the tradition has moved from a wisdom orientation to an apocalyptic one.'

and cannot reasonably be used to assert that Jesus *never* spoke apocalyptically, which simply cannot be known from the available sources.

There are yet other scholars who strongly disagree with the findings of the Jesus Seminar, including Dale Allison, who assert that the historical Jesus is in fact one-in-the-same person as the apocalyptic Jesus who is depicted in the gospels. Allison has long affirmed the traditional view of Weiss and Schweitzer that the mission of Jesus cannot be separated from its apocalyptic context, and that those who attempt to do so are tampering with Jesus' original apocalyptic intent in order to cast him in the light of their own ideas about him.⁶² Allison has, until recently, agreed with nearly all Jesus scholars on the conviction that historical material can be discovered in the Markan text through the use of *authenticity criteria*. However, Allison has since reconsidered his position and currently rests his views of authenticity on the study of cognition and memory. In an essay for the 2012 volume, *Jesus, Criteria and the Demise of Authenticity*, Allison describes how he gradually abandoned the use of, or dependence upon, authenticity criteria to discover the historical Jesus and has concluded that the tools of dissimilarity, embarrassment, multiple attestation and so forth must be replaced by the endeavor to recover human memories.⁶³

When I found time to finally undertake the task, I quickly became dismayed. Human witnesses, it turns out, habitually misremember. Memory is reconstructive as well as reproductive and so involves imagination. It deteriorates over time. It is typically a function of self-interest. It is sculpted by narrative conventions. It regularly moves events forward and backward in time. It is altered by post-event information. And it recurrently assimilates present circumstances.⁶⁴

⁶² R.J. Miller, 'Introduction: The History of the Question', in *The Apocalyptic Jesus*, 6-11. Miller notes that Johannes Weiss first advocated the view that Jesus was an apocalyptic prophet in *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God* (1892), which was followed by Albert Schweitzer's *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1906) that presented Jesus in the same light.

⁶³ D.C. Allison, 'It Don't Come Easy', in C. Keith and A. Le Donne (eds.), *Jesus, Criteria, and the Demise of Authenticity* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 197.

⁶⁴ Allison, 'It Don't Come Easy', 197.

4.9 Why We Cannot Know What the Historical Jesus Actually Said

The difficulty in assessing whether the mission statement of Jesus reflects any historical material at all is that the criteria used for this purpose are ineffective. There is really no way to sift through Mark's sources to distinguish the Jesus tradition from Markan invention. For example, in Mark 1:14-15, Jesus launches his ministry optimistically ('good news'), but then becomes very pessimistic later in the narrative, when he begins to predict his own death at the hands of opponents (10:33, 34; 12:6, 8; 14:24, 25). Did Jesus change his mind about his ministry or has Mark simply altered the lens by which he wishes to present Jesus within the narrative? We cannot know, and, at the end of the analysis, we are always working from within Mark's perspective.

Unfortunately, it is simply not possible to discover what the historical Jesus may or may not have said in regard to his ministry.⁶⁵ As Le Donne, Keith and others have effectively argued, all of the theories of authenticity rely upon the interpretations offered by Jesus' followers.⁶⁶ The tools of criteria-based analysis that have been used to reconstruct the words of the historical Jesus are under redefinition in scholarly circles, and are now being pursued under studies of cognition and

⁶⁵ Wassén and Hägerland, *Jesus the Apocalyptic Prophet*, 117, imply that some of the mission statement may go back to the historical Jesus. Though their comment is nuanced, they posit that 1:14 contains an allusion to Isaiah (52:7 'Your God reigns'), which they say 'Jesus may have had in mind' when *he* (Jesus) made such statements as Mk 1:14, 15. The authors intimate that it is Jesus, rather than Mark, who is alluding to *the messenger of Isaiah* 'in the mission statement, 'in both language and content'. The authors do not mention that a possible allusion to Ezek. 7:7, 'Your doom has come to you...the time has come, the day is near', which, as I have sought to demonstrate, provides the statement with its ominous, apocalyptic tone. Nor do the authors mention Dan. 7:13 as a possible conflation with Ezekiel 7:7 to intimate that Jesus is the Son of man who will return with the kingdom of God on the Day of the Lord, which I have shown occurs in 1:15ab. Wassén and Hägerland do not fully explain their use of the authenticity criteria for drawing a conclusion that the historical Jesus said these things, and are perhaps expanding on an earlier statement they made regarding the certainty among scholars that Jesus came proclaiming the kingdom of God (113). I have argued that the allusions in Mk 1:15 are Markan innovations, and not authentic statements made by the historical Jesus, which I believe are confirmed by Mark's employment of the term *καρπός* to connect the mission statement to the Parousia by way of Jesus' agrarian parables that speak of the vineyard owner's return, the harvest and ripeness of figs as an indicator of the season *at hand*, and to the Parousia directly (13:33), with allusions to Daniel's 'one like a son of man' (Dan. 7:13, 14). Ezekiel appears to be the direct allusion in 1:15, which provides the narratological framework for Mark's thematic and rhetorical goals as I have discussed at length. (See Wassén and Hägerland, *Jesus*, 176, where they list the occurrences of the title *Son of Man* among the 'authentic sayings of Jesus', of which they include at least as Mk 8:38; 13:27; 14:62.) Later in their book (176) the authors note that *not* all of the 'Son of Man' references in the NT may be considered authentic, implying that authenticity criteria must be applied to sort the authentic from the inauthentic statements.

⁶⁶ C. Keith, 'The Indebtedness of the Criteria Approach to Form Criticism and Recent Attempts to Rehabilitate the Search for the Authentic Jesus' in A. Le Donne, C. Keith, (eds.), *Jesus, Criteria, and the Demise of Authenticity* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 25-38.

memory.⁶⁷ Though it is possible that there are resonances of memory in the mission statement, perhaps in the way that Hooker and Yarbro Collins have intimated, we simply cannot bend to the temptation of labelling them as *authentic*.

There are more obvious difficulties with tracing the mission statement to Jesus in the Markan text. The adaptation of a cultural memory of Jesus' mission by Mark seems unlikely from a narratological perspective. The notion that Jesus is the narrator of his own story, and that he would have spoken in a way that would have been thematically consistent with Mark's narrative, including connections to various speeches and parables, is untenable. Jesus is not the narrator of his own story - Mark is. It is up to Mark to tell the story and elicit a reaction from those who read the whole narrative and apply it to their lives. It is Mark who calls for his readers to *repent and believe*. He is calling for them to act on what they are reading. This makes it clear that the author has an agenda and that he expects his readers to follow it. For example, the author's use of *καρπός* to tie the mission statement to the parable of the fig tree and the vineyard owner demonstrates that Mark crafted the statement to connect the imperative of the readers' decision, to the imminence of the Parousia, as one of his central objectives. His framing of the mission statement within the context of Ezekiel's doom provides the context for his readers to understand the Gospel's thirteenth chapter, which provides the details of the doom implied in 1:15ab, along with the signs that it is nigh. What is clear is that the author is calling Jesus' believers to commitment, fidelity, and suffering discipleship at the end of the age. It is Mark, not Jesus, who has tied all these themes together, at a time of writing decades after Jesus' death, when his circumstances dictated it. This makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to extract firm historical material from the mission statement. Any latent, authentic saying is inextricably wrapped in the packaging of Mark's interpretative layers and used for rhetorical purposes. Any resonance of the historical Jesus in the mission statement is simply not discoverable.

⁶⁷ M.D. Hooker, 'On Using the Wrong Tool', *Theology* 75 (1972), 570-581, and eadem, 'Christology and Methodology', *NTS* 17 (1970), 480-487. Here, Morna Hooker states rather presciently that using authenticity criteria to discover the historical Jesus is problematic.

4.10 Mark's Rhetorical Purpose

What I have posited thus far is that Mark 1:15 was crafted as a summary, using the Jewish Scriptures and existing Christian baptismal formulae, to bring readers to a decision about who Jesus really is and what they should do about it, namely, to become disciples through baptism. I have sought to demonstrate that the first two phrases of the statement are closely analogous to Ezekiel 7:7-12, which, by the writer's design, allows him to cast Jesus' mission authoritatively and apocalyptically, intimating that a decision should be reached by readers or else *doom* will come upon them, as happens to unbelievers, which is made inescapably clear at the end of Mark's narrative cycle (16:16). Mark uses Ezekiel to extend the Deuteronomistic model of punishment for unbelief and restoration for repentance to a baptismal model of personal salvation based on individual repentance and confession of belief in Jesus as Messiah. Mark's version of the existing Christian baptismal formula is a reworking of what Ezekiel offered the children of Israel who reconsidered the sins of their parents. The sprinkling of water was, for Ezekiel, a sign of YHWH's cleansing and forgiveness at a time when YHWH will give his people a new heart and spirit (Ezek. 36:25, 26). This idea has been appropriated by Mark, and adapted to his purpose, using it to tie Ezekiel into his baptismal formula and apocalyptic theme. This, as has been mentioned previously, fits Mark's theological and literary agenda of presenting to his readers impending doom alongside the antidote for it, of Christian confession and baptism. But what is the urgency of Ezekiel's doom? Clearly Mark is concerned with something beyond recruiting new believers for the Christian cause and has a more pressing concern. The reason for his urgency and the apocalyptic imperative will be considered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5:

The Imperative of the Mission Statement

5.1 Introduction

By alluding to the Jewish Scriptures, Mark is able to set up his apocalyptic theme, which in fact runs throughout his entire Gospel.¹ The author depicts Jesus speaking apocalyptically in a number of ways, where the looming eschaton prefigures Jesus' mission and places it in an apocalyptic context. Clifton Black points out that the apocalyptic cast of Mark 1:1-15 foreshadows the rest of his Gospel (1:1; 8:29; 9:41; 14:61; 15:32), noting in particular that the Spirit's advent (Mk 1:8) and heaven's rending (1:10) are well-established apocalyptic motifs (see Ezek. 1:1; Joel 2:28-32). Moreover, the apocalyptic tenor of the satanic trials and angelic administrations (Mk 1:12-13; cf. Dan. 3:25, 28; Jub. 10:22-23; 23:29; 1 En. 100:5; 1QM 13:10) reflects fulfillment of the time and the in-breaking of the kingdom (Mk 1:15; Rev. 1:3; As. Mos. 10:1, 3). Black adds that unresolved tension pulsates throughout Mark and is announced at the very beginning, in the mission statement of 1:15.² Black concludes that the imperative of a decision to follow or recommit to Jesus³ is charged by the author's contention that they are all on the precipice of a day of trouble, which will bring suffering, trial and sacrifice, and finally judgment (13:32-37).

Dale Allison agrees with Black that the apocalyptic tone of Mark's Gospel is established from the very beginning, in the prologue where John the Baptist is presented as the forerunner of Jesus. He is the Elijah to come before the last days.⁴ Allison asserts that Mark's audience would likely

¹ Black, *Mark*, 265, 266. Black helpfully notes why scholars have labelled Mark 13 'the little apocalypse' and explains why the epithet does not exactly fit a wider definition of *apocalyptic*. The Markan Jesus does not disclose heavenly visions or provide a tour of the heavenly realms. Black thus describes Mark 13 as belonging to another sort of genre (other than apocalyptic) and says that although Mark does a fair amount of quoting and alluding to the Jewish Scriptures, he does very little to interpret them for his audience except to put them into the context that they are presently happening. He concludes that Mark 13 offers prophetic encouragement and admonition to disciples of Jesus, adopting an eschatological perspective that is scripturally grounded and *apocalyptically tintured*. Thus, in my view, Mark's Gospel is not *an apocalypse*, but is rather *apocalyptic* in that certain imagery is invoked by the author to pinpoint the location of his community on a timeline leading up to the end of the age in order to warn and prepare them for what they will have to endure as disciples of Jesus.

² Black, *Mark*, 67.

³ Black, *Mark*, 37. Black observes that Mark is so riveted on human misery related to the Christian confession (13:13a) that his community would clearly understand that there were terrible implications of allegiance to Jesus.

⁴ Allison, 'Plea', 654.

have known of John and of how his preaching proclaimed that they were living at the time of the end of the age. John was a prophet of the old order who spoke publicly and frequently regarding imminent eschatological judgment.⁵ Allison observes that in the Synoptic Gospels John implies that the Day of the Lord is upon Israel, and in his ministry of repentance he warns people to flee the coming wrath (cf. Mt. 3:7; Lk. 3:7).⁶ The use of the imperative 'repent' (Mk 1:15c) is reminiscent of John's apocalyptic preaching as if to infer that his message is embedded (by the Markan author) in Jesus' mission and stamped upon the admonition to believe the message before the end comes. Allison says that Mark tells his audience that the end is imminent (13:30), and he asks his readers to watch for signs of it (13:24-27) and to be prepared to flee at a moment's notice before it comes (13:14-18).

As narrator, Mark slowly connects his apocalyptic themes from the first chapter onwards, running all the way to the end of his Gospel. This gives his readers time to digest and apply these themes or face the consequences of failure to act in time. Some of the unresolved tension to which Black refers in the mission statement (1:15) is resolved in Chapter 13. In that chapter, Mark begins to make a narrative shift, away from more general information about Jesus and discipleship, toward very specific apocalyptic motifs. Black notes that Jesus speaks in and around Jerusalem before Chapter 13 (Mark 11-12) and is then presented as delivering the content of his apocalyptic discourse from the Mount of Olives overlooking Jerusalem (13:3).⁷ The author appears to be signaling to his readers that Jesus is the judge of the things described in the discourse (13:1). The details of what is to follow are fully explained by the Markan Jesus, including the spectre of war that overshadows the nation (13:7), the threat to the Temple (13:2) and the coming kingdom arriving after a time of intense tribulation (13:19, 20). Mark has Jesus explain to the disciples the context of his (Markan) interpretation of the Day of the Lord (13:24-27)⁸ and the end of the age, when the Son of man comes in power and glory (13:26).

⁵ Allison, 'Plea', 654.

⁶ Allison, 'Plea', 654.

⁷ Moloney, *Gospel of Mark*, 248.

⁸ Hooker, *Saint Mark*, 319. The language used by Mark for the Day of the Lord in 13:24, 25 is the traditional language used by the Jewish prophets and Mark uses it to evoke all the ideas of judgment day.

As noted by Moloney, Mark 13 is well organized and returns to the characteristically Markan literary pattern of carefully arranging issues that are answered in a way that benefits discipleship.⁹ Mark has not abandoned his rhetorical decision motif here; he is charging it with intensity through allusions to Jewish prophecy. Browning adds that Mark's intention is to strengthen the community in the face of persecution, and that this is part of his overall theme of suffering and discipleship, which is particularly evident in Mk 10:25-45 where the disciples must share in Jesus' 'baptism of suffering.'¹⁰ Browning, perhaps has captured the essence of Mark's intention in a rather profound way. Mark cares for his audience and wants them to be safe from the harm that he believes is coming. Mark seems to believe that the best way to be prepared for the ultimate threat of the eschaton is to anticipate suffering under trial and to strengthen his community for patient endurance and sacrifice. Yet it still remains to be shown, why Mark is so intent on doing this, and what harm he sees on the horizon for his community that would cause him to present Jesus' mission in this way. The next section will consider the very particular way in which Mark connects Ezekiel's doom (1:15a) to the nearness of the kingdom of God (1:15b), as an expectation of Jesus' Parousia, and then show how the author relates this connection to his own time and circumstances.

5.2 Mark's Expansion of the Day of the Lord

It has been argued thus far that the author uses scriptures from Ezekiel 7 to allude to the Day of the Lord, connecting the mission statement to the words of the Markan Jesus by placing the fulfillment of the time, ὁ καιρὸς, as the fulfillment of Ezekiel's trouble:

An end has come,
The end has come;
It has dawned for you;
Behold it has come!
Doom has come to you, you who dwell in the land.
The time (καιρὸς) has come,
A day of trouble is near.
(Ezek. 7:6, 7)

⁹ Moloney, *Gospel of Mark*, 251.

¹⁰ Browning, 'Mark, gospel of', 214.

Behold the day!
Behold it has come!
Doom has gone out!
(Ezek. 7:10)

The time (καιρός) has come,
The day draws near.
(Ezek. 7:12)

Mark implies that Ezekiel's *day of trouble* (Ezek. 7:7b, ἡ ἡμέρα) is the same *day*¹¹ that resonates elsewhere in the Jewish Scriptures as *the Day of the Lord* (Isa. 13:2-10; Joel 2:10-3:4; Amos 8:8-9), which will come with a darkening of the sun, the failure of the moon to give its light and the falling of the stars from heaven that portend the end of the world.¹² The Markan Jesus describes these as troubles that will come in Mark's time (13:24, 25).

Ezekiel had described the *Babylonian* siege of Jerusalem of 587 BCE (Ch. 24), but Mark's Jesus describes the *Roman* siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE. Ezekiel, in his time, envisioned a defiled Temple (8:1-11:25) and the wrath that would come upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem for their abominations (12:1-16).¹³ Mark presents very similar conditions in his own time (13:2, 14) and uses images of the Day of the Lord (13:32, τῆς ἡμέρας) to convey the notion that Ezekiel's prophecies are also being fulfilled in his own time.

5.3 Daniel's Son of Man and the Kingdom of God

In Jesus' mission statement, Mark does not explain to his readers in plain terms how intimations of the Babylonian captivity coincide with nearness to the kingdom of God in their own time. With only an allusion to Ezekiel 7 in 1:15a, the nuance of equating the kingdom of God with the Day of the Lord may have been lost on some of his scripturally less literate readers. The writer is in need

¹¹ Galambush, 'Ezekiel', 538, as noted earlier, argues that Ezekiel's prophecies display affinities with earlier prophetic texts and builds his views in particular on Amos' prophecies about the Day of the Lord. Amos often refers to 'that day' (יְמֵי), and *the end*, יְקִיָּה (Am. 8:1-10), which reappears in Ezekiel (7:2).

¹² Moloney, *Gospel of Mark*, 266.

¹³ Galambush, 'Ezekiel', 538.

of another scriptural allusion, one that he will be shown to have employed in 1:15b, to connect the mission statement to a more explanative, eschatological discourse in Mark 13:24-25, where the nearness of the kingdom of God, is associated with the Parousia, by way of Daniel's 'one like a son of man'.

In the first two phrases of the mission statement, Mark conflates allusions to Ezekiel's Day of the Lord (Mk 1:15a; Ezek. 7:7) and Daniel's returning *son of man* (Mk 1:15b; Dan. 7:13, 14; 8:17). He does this to intimate that the end will come at the time of the Parousia, on the Day of the Lord, *when* the (Danielic) son of man¹⁴ will arrive in power with great glory, *bringing with him the dominion of God and a kingdom*. The identification of Daniel's 'one like the son of man' (כְּבָר אֶנְשׁ) as Jesus, Mark's glorified 'Son of man' (υἱός ἀνθρώπου), is observable in several instances within the Markan narrative:

And behold, one like a son of man (כְּבָר אֶנְשׁ), coming with the clouds of heaven!
He came to the Ancient of Days,
And they brought him near before him.
Then to him was given a dominion (שְׁלֵטוֹן) and glory (וִיקָר) and a kingdom (וּמַלְכוּת).
His dominion (שְׁלֵטוֹן שְׁלֵטָה) is an everlasting one,
That shall not pass away, and his kingdom (וּמַלְכוּת) shall not be destroyed.
(Dan. 7:13, 14)

For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous generation,
Of him the Son of man (υἱός τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) will also be ashamed when he comes
In the glory of his father and his holy angels.
Assuredly, I tell you that there are some standing here
That will not taste death
Until they see the kingdom of God (βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ) present in power.
(Mk 8:38-9:1)

¹⁴ Much has been written regarding the various references to 'son of man' that appear in the Jewish Scriptures and the New Testament. The references in the Jewish prophets range from descriptions of a human being, usually the prophet himself, who is speaking for YHWH (בְּנֵי אָדָם), to a glorified human or angelic figure who appears in a vision riding upon, or in the clouds of heaven (כְּבָר אֶנְשׁ). The Gospel of Mark has Jesus speaking of his future return as *the Son of man* (τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) at his Parousia (13:26; 14:62). In the references in Daniel and Mark, the Danielic 'one like a son of man' and the Markan 'Son of man' are depicted as coming on the clouds to establish everlasting dominion and a kingdom.

Then they will see the Son of man (υἰὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου),
Coming on the clouds, with great power and glory.
(Mk 13:26)

Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?
Jesus said, I am and you will see the Son of man (υἰὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου),
Seated on the right hand of the power,
And coming with the clouds of heaven.
(Mk 14:62)

This, then, is how Mark connects 1:15b, ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ, the kingdom of God, to the Parousia¹⁵ and implies that they both, together, are drawing near on the Day of the Lord. Ezekiel provides the doom of that day, while Daniel provides the connection to ‘one like a son of man’ returning on the clouds.¹⁶ Mark adapts this to Jesus, who in his narrative is the glorified Son of man who brings the kingdom of God, on that day.¹⁷ The moment of crisis presented by Mark to his readers, then, is the καιρός, or the moment of decision that resides in the nexus between Ezekiel’s doom and Daniel’s returning son of man.¹⁸

¹⁵ Marcus, *The Way*, 164, is among those scholars to assert that Mark is citing Dan. 7:13 in Mk 14:62 and that the phrases in Mark, ‘Son of man’ and ‘coming on the clouds of heaven’ depend on Daniel. Marcus also posits that Mark is using a motif of power to link Mk 13:26 to Dan. 7:13, 14, and in Mk 8:38-9:1 to connect the coming of the Son of man to the coming of the kingdom in power.

¹⁶ D.F. Mitchell, *The Son of Man in Mark’s Gospel: Exploring its Possible Connections with the Book of Ezekiel* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2020), 69. Mitchell observes that a number of OT scholars are convinced that there is some dependence of Daniel on Ezekiel around his vision of the heavenly court and the language of ‘a son of man’. ‘If (in the NT) Jesus alludes to Daniel and Daniel relies upon Ezekiel, then the Son of man in the Gospels, in some respect, draws upon Ezekiel.’ I tend to agree with John J. Collins, (‘From Prophecy to Apocalypticism’ in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, Volume 1, New York: Continuum Publishing Group, 2000, 126-130, 143), and Galambush, ‘Ezekiel’ *Oxford Bible Commentary*, 538, that the motif of the storm god riding on the clouds has been adapted for OT use from a more ancient Ugaritic tradition of Baal, El, and Yamm, where the storm god Baal rides the clouds in triumph over the turbulent sea god Yamm.

¹⁷ Marcus, *The Way*, 167. Marcus reflects that the motif of seeing, ‘...you will see the Son of man...’, fits nicely within the trial scene that Mark has placed it in (14:62) and is a characteristic trait of Mark’s writing, to provide a twist of irony. By using Daniel, Mark is showing that, in the long run, Jesus will be the judge instead of the one being judged at his trial.

¹⁸ Ezekiel and Daniel appear to have employed the Ugaritic myth of the storm rider, as other writers of the Jewish Scriptures have done (cf. Ps. 68:4, 33, 34; 77:16-20; Isa. 25:8; Jonah 1:4-17). In Ezekiel’s vision of the four living creatures (1:4-26; 10; 11:22), the creatures involved do not bring dominion or a kingdom, though they do have faces like men who ride a chariot that hovers over the earth and under the heavens, in a fiery cloud. The ‘son of man’ in Ezekiel 2:1, refers not to any one the creatures, but to the prophet himself, as one given divine messages to share with Israel. There is a figure in the vision of Ezekiel, who ‘looks like a man’ (1:26), who is seen above a sapphire throne high above the chariot, but this figure is separated from the chariot, and the living creatures, by a crystal

In terms of the mission statement in Mark 1:15, the allusions are conflated, and may be demonstrated as follows:

Reference	English Text	OT Allusion	Conflation	Meaning
Mk 1:15a	The time is fulfilled,	Ezek. 7:7		OT prophecy is being fulfilled in Mark's time
Mk 1:15b	the kingdom of God is at hand,	Ezek. 7:7	Dan. 7:13, 14	The Day of the Lord (doom), the Parousia of Jesus (return of the Son of man), and the coming of the kingdom of God are all conflated into one-in-the-same event.
Mk 1:15c	repent			Christian Baptismal Formulae (call to action, to reconsider)
Mk 1:15d	and believe in the gospel.			Christian Baptismal Formulae (confession of Jesus at baptism is the antidote for doom/condemnation)

barrier (1:22). In chapters 10 and 11, the chariot reappears, but none associated with it descend from the clouds to establish a kingdom on earth but rather are engaged in temporarily extracting the glory (of the one high above the throne), from the holy place of the Temple, as destroyers are allowed to range through the city. For Mark's purposes, adapting Jesus to fit within these particular visions in Ezekiel may have been somewhat muddled. In Daniel, however, perhaps Mark found a much more useful, if not straight forward allusion, as the cloud rider motif has been adapted by Daniel into a post-exilic form, written to fit the writer's Seleucid times (in the Maccabean era) and to refer directly to the returning storm god (one like a son of man) who brings with him *dominion and an everlasting kingdom*. The geo-political development in Daniel of the four beasts as kingdoms and kings, may have allowed Mark to adapt Daniel's version of the myth to his own particular circumstances in Roman times (First Century CE). In Mark's adaptation, Jesus is the descending storm rider, the glorified Son of man, who brings dominion and the kingdom of God (Mk 9:1; 13:26) as the Roman's threatened to destroy Jerusalem and defile the Temple. In each case here mentioned, the Ugaritic myth is invoked and adapted when Jerusalem and the Temple are at risk from foreign aggressors. The writers (Ezekiel, Daniel, Mark) have carried forward much of the previous writer's adaptations, from Amos on, while adding to them new material to suit the rhetorical needs of their own time and circumstances.

5.4 The Historical Context of Mark's Gospel

Shifting now to the reason for Mark's imperative, a brief examination of the events occurring roughly at the time when Mark wrote his Gospel strongly point to the apocalyptic setting of the writer and explain why he felt that he was writing at the end of the age and that his community was at risk. The date of the composition of Mark's Gospel is generally accepted by scholars as somewhere between 69-74 CE.¹⁹ Marcus calculates that the earliest possible date for the writing of Mark is 69 CE or as late as 75 CE, which he says is still close enough to the Temple's destruction and the final end of the war for eschatological excitement to remain intense.²⁰ Yarbrow Collins is persuaded that unfulfilled prophecy in Mark 13 can also be used to date the book, particularly in the words 'not one stone shall be left upon another' (13:2). She notes that a number of scholars have viewed these comments in Mark as a case of *vaticinium ex eventu*,²¹ namely, that Mark looks back at the events linked to the Temple destruction after they have occurred. However, she posits that if Mark had written after the events, he would have described the scenes with

¹⁹ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 37-39. The dating of Mark has been widely examined and Marcus covers the current thinking to good effect. I accept the range that he presents (69-74 CE), as do most Markan scholars, though I find myself most in agreement with Hooker and Yarbrow Collins, among others, who believe that the actual range may be more tightly confined to 69-70 CE. Mark 13:14 looks *forward* to the abomination of desolation, rather than back on it. Scholars tend to view this as a case of reporting 'after the fact', but it seems to me that it would have been easy enough for Mark to follow his normal method of scriptural allusion here, in regard to Dan. 9:26, 27, by consulting rudimentary information available from Jewish history about the abominations of previous foreign rulers to reach his 'prediction' that it would recur. Foreign defilements of the Temple area had previously occurred under Antiochus, and subsequently during two separate Roman incursions (Pompey and Caligula). If Mark wrote *ex eventu*, after the year 70 CE, he would have been more precise about the Temple destruction and would have modified his abomination prediction in the way that Luke did (21:20). But Mark warns readers to look for an event on the political horizon that will remind readers of *the Danielic* abomination that caused desolation in Seleucid times (13:14). This he admonishes readers to watch for ('when you see'), prior to deciding whether or not to flee the city (13:14). As I note, Luke adjusted this, writing in the 80s, to Jerusalem being surrounded by armies (21:20), probably to account for the fact that the Markan prediction did not lead directly to the return of the Son of man on the clouds, and therefore was not an exact fulfillment of Daniel's words. In other words, *Mark was imprecise*. I have limited my assumptions to the generally accepted range of dates and audiences that are effectively covered in Marcus' summary, though my personal view is that the range is 69-70 CE, between the time of Titus' return to Judea, from Alexandria, to fulfill Vespasian's final order to destroy Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. See also J. Marcus, 'The Jewish War and the Sitz im Leben of Mark', *JBL* 111 (1992), 441-46.

²⁰ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 39.

²¹ Yarbrow Collins, *Mark*, 2. See also G. Theissen, *Gospels in Context*, tr. L. Maloney (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 259-271; J. Kloppenborg, 'Evocatio deorum, and the Date of Mark', *JBL* 124 (2005), 419-50; and J.R. Donahue, 'The Quest for the Community of Mark's Gospel', in F. van Segbroeck (ed.), *The Four Gospels* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 821-23.

greater accuracy.²² Thus, Yarbro Collins dates the completion of the Gospel of Mark to a time *before* the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE.²³

The general range accepted by modern scholars overlaps the first Jewish-Roman War (66-73 CE), which, according to Marcus, supports the theory that Mark's Gospel arose, at least in part, as a response to the Jewish Revolt that was at the heart of it. He notes that the war affected the entire Roman world, thus it does not unambiguously point in the direction of Mark's particular community or place of writing but implies that the impact of the war, and hence the relevant backdrop of Mark's Gospel, would have been greatest in the vicinity of Palestine, where the Roman and Jewish rebel forces were active. Mark's community would almost certainly have been touched by the tensions of this war, and Mark depicts the action, especially in Chapter 13, as happening in and around Palestine.²⁴

5.5 For Mark, the Action is in Jerusalem

Scholars have offered various theories of where the Markan community may have been located and to whom Mark was addressing his narrative.²⁵ There is support for various locales, as has

²² Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 2. The Temple was burned and thrown down by the Romans but not nearly to the extent that the Markan Jesus had predicted. Yarbro Collins notes that although Josephus maintains that the Temple was 'razed to the ground', he adds that 'leaving only the loftiest towers...and a portion of the wall enclosing the city to the west: the latter as an encampment for the garrison, was to remain, and the towers to indicate to posterity the nature of the city and of the strong defenses which had yet yielded to Roman prowess'. The *impreciseness* of Mark's prophecy then raises doubt that it was made *ex eventu*. For this, and several other reasons, Yarbro Collins dates the Gospel of Mark to before the Temple destruction in 70 CE (14).

²³ Josephus, *Antiquities*, XIV: IV, 4; XVIII: VII, 2; *War*, I: VII, 6. Mark's readers could not have been shocked by prophecies involving the Romans, Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple, as Pompey had attacked it and had murdered many of Jerusalem's residents and priests and had entered the holy of holies himself in 63 BCE. The memory of Caligula was even more recent, as he had erected a statue of himself on the Temple grounds in 39-40 CE, shortly after Jesus' death.

²⁴ J. Marcus, 'The Jewish War and the Sitz im Leben of Mark', in *JBL* 111/3 (1992), 448.

²⁵ Moloney, *Gospel of Mark*, 12-15. Moloney finds it impossible, after a thorough recounting of the relevant scholarship, that an exact location, region, or city can be determined where this Gospel might first have seen the light of day. He notes that he agrees with Morna Hooker that it must have originated somewhere within the Roman Empire and adds that he can 'narrow the field' to in and around Jerusalem, no wider than southern Syria, noting that the action in the narrative focuses readers to watch for the abomination of the Temple and for rumors of wars and the return of the Son of man, all described in Mark's thirteenth chapter as taking place in Jerusalem (13: 7, 10, 13, 14, 24-37).

already been touched upon, including Rome, Galilee, Egypt, Syria and Palestine.²⁶ All of these proposals have some support; however, regardless of where Mark's community may have resided, it is clear from the text that the action of the narrative described in Chapter 13 takes place in Palestine, specifically in Jerusalem. Thus, Mark's readers are transported, from wherever they may be reading or hearing his gospel, to the scenes in and around the Temple in Jerusalem, where they are told to fix their gaze and 'watch' for the Danielic abomination to occur, and this as the signal to flee that city. It is over Jerusalem, not Rome, Syria or Galilee, at the time of the Passover that Mark has placed the Markan Jesus in his narrative, to describe the events and signs of the Day of the Lord and his Danielic return to his disciples. Whether Mark wrote to a community in any other city is really beside the point of this dissertation. The tension that Mark brings to the mission statement relies upon what happens in Jerusalem.

5.6 Josephus' Account of the Siege of Jerusalem

The first Jewish-Roman War, including the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Jewish Temple, is described in detail by Josephus in Books IV, V and VI of *War of the Jews*. These sections cover about 19 months between the siege of Gamala to the destruction of the Temple by Titus. Josephus thus provides a direct, contemporary historical context for Mark's Gospel in the years of 69-70 CE, that will now be outlined.

The Jewish Revolt brought the Roman general Vespasian to Judea in 67 CE on orders from Nero to quell the unrest there. Vespasian's strategy was to empty the north of rebels and push them south in a scorched earth campaign. The war reached a turning point in the battles of Yodfat and

²⁶ Hooker, *Saint Mark*, 5-8. Early tradition, going back to Papias (from an earlier lost work of Papias in 130 CE that was preserved by Eusebius in *Ecclesiastical History*, iii.39.15) places Mark in Rome as Peter's scribe or translator. Hooker notes that Clement of Alexandria and Irenaeus both place Mark in Rome based largely on the idea of his proximity to Peter. Hooker discounts the arguments that have been put forth regarding Mark's use of Latin words and warnings about persecutions, that may reflect Neronian times. She also discounts Chrysostom, who thought the community may have been based in Egypt, which she believes is a misinterpretation of a comment made by Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History*, ii.15.1-2, ii.16.1), that Mark went to Egypt and preached his Gospel there. Hooker also dismisses an argument put forward by Marxsen, namely that the Gospel was intended to warn Galileans to flee to Galilee; she argues that this is at odds with Mark's lack of understanding of local geography and by his explanation of Aramaic terms. She concludes that specifying a location for the community any narrower than 'somewhere in the Roman Empire' is problematic.

Gischala in that year, after which Vespasian's forces were able to root out the rebel strongholds in the Galilee and push them toward Jerusalem. The Roman campaign created a refugee crisis in Jerusalem, as rebels and refugees sought safety there in their thousands.

News of Nero's death in 68 CE, and the power struggle that unfolded in Rome as a result, caused Vespasian to pause the campaign until he had confirmation from Rome of how to proceed. In 69, civil war erupted between Roman competitors who wished to assume power after Nero.²⁷ When Vespasian was finally called to Rome, after being named to the role of Emperor by his legions,²⁸ he left Judea for Alexandria and put his son Titus in charge of the Judean campaign. From Alexandria, Vespasian ordered Titus to return from Alexandria, where he camped with his father and his troops, to Judea with a select contingency of Vespasian's army to destroy Jerusalem.²⁹

Titus timed his attack on Jerusalem in 70 CE to coincide with the Jewish Passover, when the city would be filled with pilgrims and rebels.³⁰ His legions approached the city from opposing directions, and surrounded and besieged it, eventually starving it out, by blocking all incoming supplies of food. The siege included many phases and battles and lasted about five months. In a series of back-and-forth battles with rebel forces inside, the city was finally taken by the Romans and the Temple was destroyed by fire.³¹ Titus' troops were then said to have defiled the Temple area by entering its smoldering precincts, and Josephus records that Titus himself stood in the holy place,³² which perhaps is the moment described in Mark's discourse, where he directs his readers to the words of Daniel: 'But when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by

²⁷ In 69 CE, four emperors ascended to the throne of Rome after Nero's death, Galba, Otho, Vitellius and Vespasian. It is often referred to by historians as the year of the four emperors.

²⁸ Josephus, *Jewish War*, IV, 10.4.

²⁹ Josephus, *Jewish War*, IV, 11.5.

³⁰ Estimates of the amount of Jewish and/or Christian pilgrims flooding Jerusalem for the Passover range from several hundred thousand to a million worshipers. Jerusalem's resident population at the time was approximately 75,000 people. Note that pilgrims may have included Christians returning for the anniversary of Jesus' Passion, which coincided with the Jewish Passover. Most of the Jewish rebels in the city were refugees from the Galilee, which were estimated to be around 10,000 additional residents.

³¹ Josephus, *Jewish War*, VI, 4.7.

³² Josephus, *Jewish War*, VI, 4.7.

Daniel the prophet, standing where it should not be, then let the reader understand, that those in Judea should flee' (Mk 13:14; cf. Dan. 9:26, 27).

Mark's allusion to the 'abomination of desolation' demonstrates that he is writing during the time of the Roman siege, or perhaps just after the Romans had destroyed the Temple and Titus had gone to the Temple Mount. It reveals that Mark's intended audience, at least in terms of the events he describes, is primarily those in Jerusalem who would have experienced these events first-hand.

The Roman defeat of the Jews sent shock waves throughout Judea and to the nearby provinces where Gentile Christians, perhaps including those in Mark's own community, may have lived and where new fears arose. Josephus reports that the rebels had been driven out of their strongholds and only a few Zealot enclaves remained, and that during the siege and for some time afterward Titus sent out Jewish captives to the nearby provinces so that they 'might be destroyed upon their theatres, by sword and by wild beasts and those under seventeen years old, to serve as their slaves'.³³

Josephus was an eyewitness to the events in 70 CE and wrote about them just a few years after they occurred, probably c. 75 CE, when he reports that the siege had included mass crucifixions, imprisonments, fires, and starvation within the Old City. Although his numbers are likely to be inflated for Roman consumption,³⁴ he notes that 1.1 million Judean citizens perished along with 100,000 non-combatants in Galilee. Some 97,000 Judeans became Roman slaves after the city

³³ Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, VI, 9.2.

³⁴ Josephus was a Jewish rebel of the period who became the adopted son of Vespasian during the war and for a time acted as a mediator between the Jews and Romans. This has been the cause of criticism of his writing with Flavian sympathy, sometimes inflating the numbers of enemy forces, casualties, etc. *The Jewish War* was written c. 75 CE, in close proximity to the war, when Vespasian and Titus were still alive and in power, and so Josephus' Roman sympathies would have been at their height. Later, he published *Antiquities of the Jews* (94), *Against Apion* (97) and *The Life of Josephus* (99), with less of a Roman emphasis.

was taken.³⁵ The results were catastrophic, and the events brought an end to the Jewish state and system of centralized worship at the Temple and displaced nearly everyone in the country.

It seems to me that Yarbrow Collins is correct in regard to the dating of the Gospel of Mark. Given that Jerusalem was still in Jewish hands in 69 CE,³⁶ with 20,000 of infantry soldiers inside the city and others available outside of it, a date before 70 CE does not make much sense in terms of the impending doom of Ezekiel's Day of the Lord, to which an allusion is made in Mark 1:15a. Vespasian had left Judea in 69 CE and had chosen *not* to assail the city and Temple by the time he had left for Alexandria. It seems likely that Mark, and nearly everyone in Judea at the time, would have been watching intently for the next Roman move after what seemed to be a Roman retreat, with both Vespasian and Titus headed back to Rome.

As Vespasian sailed for Italy, Titus remained behind in Egypt and boarded his father's troops on long boats from Alexandria, then marched them back to Judea to fulfill Vespasian's order of destruction.³⁷ As Titus marched along the Mediterranean coast to gather his forces in Caesarea for the final march on Jerusalem, he calculated a strategy to attack Jerusalem on the holy day.³⁸ Thus, it is the time between Vespasian's order for Titus to return to Jerusalem at the end of the Winter of 69 CE, and the Passover during the siege of Jerusalem in the Spring of 70 CE, adding on the five months for the siege, that, in my view, best fits the dating of the Gospel of Mark. This is roughly the period that Josephus describes in books IV-VI of *War of the Jews*. It is thus the return of Titus that perhaps is responsible for Mark's intimations of the end, impending doom and his

³⁵ Josephus, *Jewish War*, VI, 9.3 reports that the large number of prisoners taken captive and who died during the siege in 70 CE was due to the Passover celebration, as Jews from around the country and wider provinces had come to the city for the festival, as the siege began. Josephus set the number of the besieged at over a million, while Tacitus 'had heard' the number to be 600,000 (*Histories V*, 13).

³⁶ Marcus, 'Sitz im Leben', 450; see also Josephus, *Jewish War*, IV 3.7-8.

³⁷ Josephus, *Jewish War*, IV, 9.5.

³⁸ Josephus, *Jewish War*, VI 9.4. 'Now this vast multitude is indeed collected out of the remote places, but the entire nation was now shut up by fate as in prison, and the Roman army encompassed the city, when it was crowded with inhabitants.'

apocalyptic outlook.³⁹ The destruction of the Jewish Temple with Titus standing on the Temple Mount seems to provide evidence in support of this interpretation.

Regardless of this rather specific timing, Mark's circumstances and proximity to the war have an enormous impact on his narrative. He seems to have direct knowledge of these geo-political events, and his allusions to Jewish prophecy gain context through an understanding of the Roman invasion. Even if his Gospel was written after these events had taken place, it is the context of these events that gives his Gospel apocalyptic intensity. This is important in terms of Mark's imperative for his readers. The allusions to the prophecies of Ezekiel and Daniel that harken back to Babylonian times and the Maccabean Revolt respectively, are transported by Mark to a Roman setting in his own time, where Titus, the son of the emperor Vespasian, looms as a Danielic character: 'the people of the prince who is to come, will destroy the city and the sanctuary' (Dan. 9:26). The warning in Daniel 9:26 could be a headline torn from Mark's current events, where the Temple is engulfed in a war centered in Jerusalem (cf. Dan. 12:11). Though Daniel had written about the Seleucid occupation and Temple defilements, his words seem also to apply to Mark's time: 'the Messiah will be cut off', and afterward 'desolations are determined', 'until the time of the end' (Dan. 9:26, 27).

Joel Marcus notes that the Gospel of Mark was written at a time when the Jewish world was gripped by the eschatological expectations of the Jewish Scriptures, and that Mark was likely spurred on by the conviction that God was about to act decisively to fulfill the ancient promises of his people.⁴⁰ This was not the first time that Jerusalem had been surrounded by foreign enemies and the people and Temple were put at risk. Marcus posits that this is the primary

³⁹ Josephus, *Jewish War*, IV, 11, 5. Josephus recounts that the march of Titus, near the end of winter in 69 CE, began on foot to Nicopolis, where Titus then put his army in longboats and sailed them to Thmuis, where he marched them to Tanis and then to intermittent stations over the mouths of the Nile, before entering the desert to Gaza, then to Ascalon, Jamnia, Joppa and finally to Caesarea where he set about organizing his forces to make the final move on Jerusalem, a force that was larger than any gathered under Vespasian in earlier campaigns, some 70,000 troops. Titus then marched his army south, from Caesarea to Jerusalem on the main, central route but sent parts of his army along the coast and on the eastern border in parallel, to alleviate potential supply problems. This would have taken several months, giving the Jews time to prepare and consider the import of Titus' return and progress toward the capital.

⁴⁰ Marcus, *The Way*, 199.

reason for Mark's reworking of the Jewish Scriptures – it is the writer's attempt to recontextualize them for his own time. Marcus says that the Jewish eschatological texts reworked by Mark were already leaning in the direction of his interpretation and that Mark lands them by continuing the trajectory they were already on, in his own time and circumstances.

5.7 How Mark's Apocalyptic Intimations May Have Been Received

It has been posited in this dissertation that Mark used the Jewish Scriptures to charge Jesus' mission statement with apocalyptic tension, so an obvious question is this: what did people think about what Mark had written? Is it possible to know how Mark's Gospel was received by his readers at the time it was released or read in public for the first time? No, it is not. But I think some conjecture might be reasonably applied here. It is virtually certain that the backdrop for the Gospel was the Jewish-Roman War. Therefore, I think it may be reasonably assumed that Mark's intended audience may have struggled to find the *good news* in what Mark was presenting.⁴¹ After all, the forces responsible for Jesus' death appeared by all accounts to be winning the day. It was the Romans, not the Jewish rebels, who were attaining military success and were threatening to destroy the Temple. In addition to proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God (1:14), the Markan Jesus is the one to warn readers that the times are about to get very tough, and that believers will suffer for his name and should prepare their testimonies. Black notes that the key word used here by Mark is παραδώσουσιν (13:9, 11, 12), meaning *they will be handed over* or *they will be betrayed*. Mark uses this very word to describe what happens to John the Baptist (1:14) and Jesus (3:19; 10:33; 14:41). The ensuing torments, it is claimed, will be concentrated upon the disciples, 'bearing witness on my account' (13:9) and 'hated by all because of my name' (13:13). Mark warns readers to watch out for themselves because they will be betrayed by members of their own household (13:12).⁴² Thus, the news is not all 'good', but

⁴¹ Hays, *Echoes*, 20, reflects as follows: '...Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom comes into conflict with the authorities, 'the wicked tenants', who are the keepers of God's vineyard, Israel (Mk 12:1-12). We might expect the outcome of this clash to be the annihilation of those who resist God's kingdom, Jewish and Gentile rulers alike. Instead, Mark's story leads astonishingly to the violent death of Jesus, the beloved son, the bearer of the kingdom message. How is such an event 'good news'? To ask that question, is to draw near to the heart of the mystery of the kingdom.'

⁴² Black, *Mark*, 267.

is rather filled with news about worrisome developments that must have filled his readers with trepidation, especially those in proximity to the Roman action.

Mark's audience likely took these warnings as a shock, but they could not have been totally surprised by them either. Given their experience with the Romans, they knew what they were up against. The residents of Roman Judea had been subjects of the Empire for some time and had been exposed to Roman justice, military brutality and the whims of the emperor ever since Pompey first attacked the nation and desecrated the Temple in 63 BCE. Judeans understood that any flare-up against Roman order held the potential for disaster. In other words, there were really no surprises in terms of what the Romans might do if they marched into Jerusalem. What was probably much harder for Mark's readers to reconcile was what Jesus would do in response to the Roman threat on the sanctuary and perhaps on behalf of elect believers. Would he arrive from the heavens in the nick of time, to vanquish the foreign threat and save them all before the end?

Mark appears to have done his best to answer questions like these by presenting very specific signs leading up to the Parousia. Indeed, the questions asked of the Markan Jesus by disciples at the beginning of Chapter 13 may well have served this purpose. Some may have felt disillusioned by the anticipated outcome, having perhaps joined the movement in better times, expecting the kingdom of God to come in a different, less invasive way, perhaps in the fashion of a restored Davidic kingdom or a redux of the Maccabean Revolt resulting in a period of independence and restoration. Going as victims before the Roman legions, looking to the sky for their redemption, may not be exactly what they had in mind for the kingdom of God. As Mark emphasizes their potential arrest and delivery into the hands of the authorities, the disciples of Jesus in Mark's time may have been aghast, understandably horrified, and filled with dread over these prospects. What, after all, must Mark's readers have felt when the Markan Jesus explains that, in the midst of the woes that are coming, they must watch out for themselves (13:9), and be betrayed by the members of their own households (13:12)?⁴³

⁴³ Black, *Mark*, 267.

Mark's warnings regarding the imminent arrival of the eschaton and the Parousia must have raised other questions in his community. How exactly was God going to save them from the Romans (12:36)? For example, how was Jesus going to destroy the Roman legions and siege engines, arriving on the clouds rather than engaging them on the ground? Mark tells his readers to carry their own crosses and prepare to be baptized with a baptism of suffering, similar to that to which Jesus himself was baptized (8:34; 10:39). Thus, the *doom* that he intimates is something they could not really escape from, but only make themselves ready for. In all ways, the picture that Mark paints is clear - what happened to Jesus is going to happen to them.

5.8 How Mark Brings His Readers Back to the Decision Motif

Mark's readers may have felt that they were entering a dead-end street, with no opportunity to turn around and go back the way they came. Indeed, the Markan Jesus describes the end as like being inside a house watching for the door to suddenly burst open as the master of the house comes crashing in (13:34-37). Mark's Jesus advises readers to be sure to give their testimony as the enemy takes them into custody (13:11), and to trust the Holy Spirit to provide them with what to say when the time comes. The signs all seem to point one way, to an appointment with judgment, on that great and terrible Day of the Lord (Mk 13:24-27; cf. Ezek. 32:7-8; Isa. 13:10; Joel 2:10). Yet, on *that day*, the Markan Jesus promises that suffering will be limited (13:20), and those who endure to the end will be 'saved' (13:13).

Still, in a practical way there is no escape, for that day *will* come. Black points out that following the celestial convulsions, 'they' - presumably everyone, but specifically those who have endured faithfully to the end - will see the Son of man coming in the clouds, with power and great glory. Black goes on to say that the common thread of all of Mark's references to the Son of man is that *he will come*. Amid terrible distress, the supervisory Son of man and his messengers will rescue God's elect from the four winds to heaven and earth's farthest bounds (cf. Deut. 30:3, 4); none so chosen shall be lost. This is a pervasive biblical hope (see Isa. 11:1, 16; Ezek. 39:25-29; Zech.

10:6-12).⁴⁴ The only escape, it seems, is to endure to the end, when the elect will be gathered (13:27), at the moment of the Parousia. Here, then, is how Mark transports his readers back to the decision motif from the dark place of being trapped inside the city, waiting for the Romans to break through, at the end of the dead-end street on the Day of the Lord (Mk 13). The key verse comes in 13:30, 'Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away until all these things take place', directing his readers back to the scene of the Transfiguration in Mark 9:1, 'Assuredly, I say to you that there are some here standing who *will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God present with power*'.

This is how Mark shows his readers the way out of the impending doom. The Son of man's arrival comes at a victorious moment in the narrative, just as Peter discovers Jesus' true identity and Jesus reveals his divine splendor in the Transfiguration. It is as if the author has left his readers breadcrumbs to find their way back to the decision motif, which had ended in 9:1, with the Markan Jesus identifying himself as the Danielic Son of man.

If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whomever desires to save his life will lose it and whoever desires to lose his life will for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of man will also be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with his holy angels. (Mk 8:34-38)

Morna Hooker notes that in Mark 8:38-9:1 the glory of the coming of the Son of man is linked with his bringing the kingdom of God, where here they are both interpreted as attributes of the Son of man. She goes on to explain that the idea that God will gather the remnant of his people from and bring them to Judea is found in the Jewish Scriptures (e.g., Isa. 11, 43). Here, in Mark 8, however, the elect who will be gathered are members of the *new* Israel. Hooker concludes that this passage is the assurance for Mark's readers that whatever sufferings they may have to endure, their faithfulness will be rewarded on the Last Day, when they are acknowledged by the

⁴⁴ Black, *Mark*, 270, 271.

Son of man at his coming:⁴⁵ 'Assuredly I say to you, that there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God present with power' (Mk 9:1).

5.9 The Fidelity of Suffering Disciples

At the time of the writing of Mark's Gospel, the Roman occupation had reached its zenith in Judea. Mark's community found themselves searching for comfort, hope and guidance at the moment of crisis, at the time of uttermost need.⁴⁶ This is the historical setting of Mark's Gospel, which in fact explains the urgency and the imperative of the mission statement in Mark 1:15, and answers the question of why Mark felt it necessary to use apocalyptic imagery to depict the Day of the Lord in the shadow of the Jewish-Roman War. No doubt he sought to deliver hope and comfort at what he believed was the end of the age, and to assure his readers that the safety of their souls rested in their belief and commitment to Jesus until the end. The war had catalyzed the apocalyptic hope of Jesus' believers and confirmed their worst fears.⁴⁷ There would be no guarantee of rescue in this world, and the kingdom offered through faith in the Messiah involved more than suffering; it required sacrifice, which would not go unrewarded.

Donahue aptly describes the model of Jesus' suffering as an essential element of discipleship:

Mark does not canonize suffering as an absolute good or as the unique form of Christian discipleship. Jesus predicts that suffering will come as a concomitant to preaching the gospel (Dan 13:11), but the posture during suffering is to be one of faithful endurance (Dan 13:13) and watchfulness before the end (Dan 13:34-36). Jesus is not simply a model to be followed on the way to suffering, but a model of one who in the midst of suffering can address God as *abba*, and who can see in suffering the will of God, even with the awareness that his will could be otherwise (14:34-36). The conjunction of suffering and discipleship leads one to the mystery of God and not simply to a contemplation of the cross of Jesus.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Hooker, *Saint Mark*, 319.

⁴⁶ Marcus, *Mark*, 140.

⁴⁷ Marcus, *Mark*, 140.

⁴⁸ Donahue, *Neglected Factor*, 563-94.

This is what Donahue calls 'the neglected factor of Mark's theology'. Knowing that individuals must commit to every level of discipleship, including taking up their own crosses as Jesus did, and that they must demonstrate unflinching fidelity to that decision in the hardest of times, which in 70 CE had arrived. Mark's Gospel, then, can be interpreted as *a just-in-time apocalyptic text* offering consolation to the Christian community at their moment of crisis. It is a guide to discipleship and encouragement in suffering for a community that must prepare for sacrifice at what they thought was the end of the age. Mark does not expect the movement to survive the times, or human history to continue beyond the scope of his narrative. He thought of himself as writing at the very end of all things, at the very cusp of the eschaton as his community is being led to the cross, and that his narrative would come out at the turning of the tide, at a moment of sea change between ages.

Conclusion

The mission statement of Jesus, as presented by Mark in 1:15, has been interpreted in this study as a rhetorical summary and baptismal formula that the author creates and places on the lips of Jesus for use within his narrative. The author constructs the first half of the statement (1:15ab), using a conflation of allusions to the Jewish Scriptures, to set the apocalyptic tone for the coming kingdom God, which he implies will come on the Day of the Lord, when the Son of man, Jesus, will return and bring the kingdom with him. The author constructs the second half of the statement (1:15cd) as an antidote for impending doom, judgment, and condemnation. By repenting and believing in the gospel that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God (1:1), readers can be baptized into belief in Jesus and serve as his suffering disciples until the end comes. At that time, they will be included in the gathered elect, because they have made the right choice at the critical time, at the *καίρῳ*, to accept Jesus after he has been rejected by Israel.

This dissertation has sought to demonstrate how the author uses the summary of Mark 1:15, in the form of an overall decision motif, to take readers through a series of examples and parables of Jesus' life and sayings. The goal of this summary is to lead believers to baptism, which is strongly suggested by the close alignment of Mark's summary to the baptismal formulae attested in the speeches in Acts and in Paul's writings, and to allusions in the prophecies of Ezekiel of the sprinkling of water on the repentant individual. Any doubt that baptism is the goal of the summary in Mark 1:15 is answered definitively at the end of the Markan Gospel in the final sweep of his narrative cycle (16:16).

The decision motif and the call to action of baptism in the mission statement underpin a grand theme within the Gospel of Mark: *suffering discipleship under trial*. The author presents to his readers what they likely already know, namely, that they are headed for very rough times. The author does not reassure them of physical escape or political-military victory, but rather explains to them that they are destined for the same fate as Jesus, to carry their own crosses and to lay down their lives for the cause.

Faced with the prospects of that doom, there comes a moment of crisis, and perhaps of clarity, for Mark's readers, who are given the opportunity to fortify themselves for the woes that lie ahead, and to commit themselves to the belief that Jesus is who Mark says he is. Challenges to their faith in the moments prior to the final judgment on the Day of the Lord will result in their transformation before the moment of death, when they will see Jesus arrive on the clouds in power and glory to gather his elect on the first day of the kingdom of God. Thus, the reward that Mark extends to his readers is that they may be found worthy in their decision to follow Jesus, as that day arrives when Jesus comes with dominion and the kingdom long promised by the prophets.

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