

MARK AS NARRATIVE¹

Plot and Structure of Mark 4,35-8,30

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Abstract:

Every literature consists of Story and Plot, or should I say, series of events. While the Story is about what happened literally, the Plot is more about how the narrator explains what happened. Aristotle alleged that the Plot and Structure were the most important elements in of a Tragedy (*Poetics* VI,5; VII,1). However, the success of a story also depends on the rendering of Character (*Poetics* VI,5). Therefore, the study about Characters in Narrative Criticism is necessary to conclude the exploration of a literature. Gospel of Mark, as presented in this paper is through and through a story. Study of plot and structure in it, therefore, is necessary to build the sufficient base for study of character. This research paper is dedicated mainly on plot of the Gospel of Mark, particularly Mark 4,35-8,30. To understand the plot, it is essential to know the style and context of the literature at hand, facts about the author and the setting of the story.

Keywords:

Plot, character, structure, narrative criticism

There is a consensus stating Gospel of Mark as a narrative, a narration of series of events.² It fulfils the minimum required elements of a

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¹ By “narrative (noun)”, I mean all three definitions: (a) a story or account of events, experiences, or the like, whether true or fictitious, (b) a book, literary work, etc., containing such a story, and (c) the art, technique, or process of narrating. The definitions are taken from dictionary.reference.com.

² See the highly influential David RHOADS and Donald MICHIE, *Mark as Story, An Introduction to the Narrative of A Gospel*, Fortress, Philadelphia (PA) 1982, xv. To treat Mark as a story

story: plot, setting and characters. It even has some ‘spices’ of a good story: a prologue, thriller, mysteries, great characters descriptions, turning-points, climax and an epilogue. We will return to this later on. However, we cannot deny that Mark might not be as interesting as modern fictions for some of the today’s readers.

Mark’s Gospel was written to the readers of its time and culture. This cultural mind-set limits Mark in imparting its messages to the audiences beyond. Some scholars even agreed to the possibility that the Gospel is written for Judaic-Christian audiences.³ Some even said that it was meant to be read during liturgical meetings. Other scholar, such as Hendriksen and Kistemaker argue that the intention of Mark is to reach the entire Greek-speaking world, to make the messages of the Gospel meaningful to all.⁴

We need not further the dichotomy of the subject. Sufficient to say the next statement of Bolt is evenhanded. There were substantial Jewish materials within the Gospel, that “Mark is a Hellenistic document arising from a Jewish context”.⁵ However, internally there were a lot of Latin language traces as well. Vocabularies like *mo,dioj* from *modius* (4,21), *legi,w,n* from *legio* (5,9.15), *spekoula,twr* from *speculator* (6,27), *dhna,rion* from *denarius* (6,37), *xe,sthj* from *sextarius* (7,4), *kh/nsoj* from *census* (12,14), *fragello,w* from *fragellare* (15,15), and *kenturi,w,n* from *centurio*⁶ (15,39.44-45) were direct transliterations from Latin words.

and as a whole, according to Williams, is two of the most important principles to have a good look at the Gospel; Joel F. Williams, “Discipleship and the Minor Characters in Mark’s Gospel”, in *BS* 153 (July-September, 1996), 332-343. See also Christopher W. SKINNER, “The Appearance and Impact of *Mark as Story*”, in Kelly R. IVERSON and Christopher W. SKINNER (eds.), *Mark as Story, Retrospect and Prospect*, Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta (GA), 2011, 1-16. Robert T. Tannehill, “Reading it Whole: the Function of Mark 8,34-35 in Mark’s Story”, in *QR* 2,2 (Summer 1982), 67-78. Timothy WIARDA, “Story-Sensitive Exegesis and Old Testament Allusions in Mark”, in *JETS* 49,3 (September 2006), 489.

³ Community of Mark as a Judaic-Christian community is one of the basic presupposition in Ernest BEST, “Mark’s Narrative Technique”, in *JSNT* 37 (1989), 43-58.

⁴ W. HENDRIKSEN and S. KISTEMAKER, *Mark*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids (MI) 1983.

⁵ Peter G. BOLT, *Jesus’ Defeat of Death, Persuading Mark’s Early Readers*, Cambridge University Press, New York (NY) 2003, 10.

⁶ Matthew and Luke used the word “e`katonta,rchj”, the Greek proper translation for centurion.

As for styles, Mark is famous among scholars because of his simple and popular Greek. He often used Hebraic or Aramaic custom of creating sentences as well, such as verbs at the beginning of the sentence and abundant use of the conjunction “and” (“kai” in Greek and “ו” in Hebrew) instead of the more proper conjunctions.⁷ Several times he also transliterated directly Aramaic words into Greek: boanhrge,j (3,17), taliqa koum (5,41), korba^h (7,11), Efffaqa (7,34), Bartimai/oj (10,46), Golgoqa(15,22), and Jesus’ words: elwi elwi lema sabacqani (15,34).

Mark’s biblical narrative was known also of his technique of repetition, whether the repetitions of phrases with similar meaning, repetitions of messages, or even verbatim repetition. Robert Alter mentioned about the repetition in the biblical narrative and classic folklores, especially of that verbatim, as a feature that looks most “primitive” and alien to the casual modern eye that could sway today readers from the authentic interpretation. However, it is indeed one of the most effective ways to convey ideas.⁸ Structural and theological wise, the duplications in Mark might come out as one of the best ways to comprehend the purpose of the Gospel.

First of all, it would be judicious to say that Mark was very cautious and consensual in repeating these messages in three: three divine titles of Jesus in the first chapter (Christ: 1,1, Son of God: 1,1, the Holy One of God: 1,24), three authorities to confirm his divinity (Isaiah: 1,2-3, John the Baptist: 1,7-8, and from Heaven: 1,9-11), three “euuagge,lion” related directly to Jesus (1,1; 1,14; 1,15), the prophecies of the Passion (8,31; 9,31; 10,32) and Jesus’ command to stay awake (13,33; 13,35; 13,38). These next events in three could also give sufficient groundwork to begin research on Mark: the failures of the disciples to stay awake (14,37; 14,40; 14,41), testimonies against Jesus (14,56; 14,57; 14,63-64), Peter’s denial (14,68; 14,70; 14,71), and Pilate’s ‘defense’ efforts of Jesus (15,9; 15,12; 15,14).

⁷ Mark used only 33 forms of conjunctions throughout his Gospel. Matthew applied 40 forms, while Luke utilized not less than 45 forms.

⁸ Robert ALTER, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, Basic Books, New York (NY) 1981, 88.

In addition, the repetitions of the similarly meaning words or phrases indicated the Gospel of Mark had had its origin from strong story-telling style or even oral tradition.⁹ For example:

1,32	that evening//at sundown
1,42	the leprosy left him//he was made clean
1,45	to proclaim it freely//to spread the word

Double questions to emphasize (a technique of oral teaching) such as:

3,14	"Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?"
4,30	"With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it?"

To create vivid description, Mark frequently utilized zoom-in technique. This technique could create the mood as if the readers were there on set of the story. Furthermore, Mark knew well that combined with flamboyant temporal and spatial descriptions, the feeling of involvement could be bolstered. Below are some examples:

1,32	That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons.
1,35	In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed.
2,2	So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them.
2,3-4	Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat

⁹ W.R. Telford, supporting Mark as a part of Christian oral traditions, stated that "because of its compositional techniques, structure and style, the Gospel should be considered as 'oral traditional literature', an oral/aural narrative which was design for performance before and in interaction with a live audience, and the evangelist perhaps as an itinerant story teller or oral performer". W.R. TELFORD, *The Theology of the Gospel of Mark*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2002, 16.

	on which the paralytic lay.
7,33	He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue.

The vivid descriptions of the events gave away hints of the Gospel's oral origin. Yet another support to this theory is the frequent use of the adverb "ευϋαυτη" ("at once") in Mark. In chapter 1 alone, Mark used it 11 times, for a total of 41 times in the whole Gospel.¹⁰ Naturally, this particular adverb can produce dramatic developments of plot, but in most literatures it might only reduce the quality of the story by creating *lollapalooza* or "*deus ex machina*" situations, especially when it was connected with the conjunction "και". At any rate, the adverb generally has sense of immediacy.

The context of Mark was the Jewish-Roman thought world. However, in spite of its "foreign" cultural atmosphere, in most parts the simplicity and comprehensible nature of it as a story is explicable, even for modern readers from diverse backgrounds. Therefore, the first audiences of Mark could be middle-eastern Christians, but the messages were not supposed to be kept hidden to the whole world. While it tells story about a Jew name Jesus in a style closest to a biography, all in all the Gospel of Mark is evangelistic.¹¹

MARK'S PLOT IN GENERAL

Papias' critic of Mark being "not in order" might have been right. However, what if Mark intended to make his Gospel the way it was since the beginning? Recent studies grant us a new perspective of what might be the real quality of the Gospel of Mark. Layers of structures, such as sandwiched and framed and chiasmic structures, engaging plots, and thriller-approach narrative technique are some of the distinguished characteristics of Mark compared to its counterparts.

¹⁰ For comparison, Matthew only used it 5 times and Luke even less than that, 1 time.

¹¹ Robert H. GUNDRY, *Mark, A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross*, William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids (MI) 1993, 1050.

Plot is the most important element in a story. The purpose of plot in a story is to weave events or facts together to form comprehensible storyline.¹² D. Marguerat and Y. Bourguin proposed this definition:¹³

“Plot: systematization of the events that build the story: these events are related one to each other through link of causality (i.e. configuration) and inserted in a chronological process (i.e. consecution).”

The emphasis of above definition is the process of causes and effects. To be more precise, the process usually is the weaving of: (1) exposition or the initial situation, (2) complication, (3) transformative action, (4) solution, and (5) final situation. With this approach the macro-plot of Mark could be subsequently structured as following:

Exposition	Mk 1,1-45	<i>(John the Baptist, the Forerunner)</i> Enter Jesus Christ, Son of God <i>(The spiritual entities, desert, disciples and companions)</i>
Complication	Mk 2,1 – 4,34	Enter the so-called adversaries of Jesus
Transformative action	Mk 4,35 – 8,30	Jesus, the Lord of all
Solution	Mk 8,31 – 15,47	Exit the so-called triumphant adversaries of Jesus
Final situation	16,1 – 16,20	<i>(The empty tomb, a young man, companions, and disciples)</i> Exit Jesus to sit down at the right hand of God <i>(The disciples, the Successors)</i>

¹² Aristotle defined it as “the arrangement of the incidents” (*Poetics*, VI, 4).

¹³ D. MARGUERAT and Y. BOURQUIN, *Per leggere i racconti biblici, seconda edizione riveduta e ampliata sulla base della quarta edizione francese*, Edizioni Borla, Roma 2011, 48.

Exposition: Enter Jesus Christ, Son of God¹⁴ (Mk 1,1-45)

In exposition, the circumstances of the events to come are revealed, such as the actions introducing the characters, the purpose or mission of the characters, the seeds of tension and obstacles to the mission (the obstacles and difficulties to be expected later on in the story), and the attempts to anticipate and surpass the tension.¹⁵ These elements were not presented completely in Mark. The reason is since the beginning Mark already stressed out the nature of Jesus. He was the Christ and Son of God! It was a huge revelation for the readers.¹⁶ By making this statement Mark only put the readers in two situations. The first one, the readers were in advantage of all the other characters in the Gospel regarding the knowledge about Jesus. However, at the same time, the statement brought about the second situation which was the questioning about what make Jesus the Christ, and most of all, the Son of God? If He is the Son of God, how His life would be among ordinary human beings? In what sense the Son of God stood for? Mark revealed the nature of Jesus, but at the same time set stage for his 'detective' story surrounding the mystery character called Jesus.¹⁷

¹⁴ Regarding Mark 1,1, according to Metzger, the lack of the title "υι'ου θεου" in *Codex Sinaiticus* (א* Q 28^c) is probably because of an oversight in copying. Since *Codex Vaticanus* (B), *Codex Bezae* (D), *Codex Washingtonianus* (W) all support the presence of "υι'ου θεου" it is advisable not to omit it. Bruce M. METZGER, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, Second Edition*, United Bible Societies, New York (NY) 1994, 62.

¹⁵ MARGUERAT and BOURQUIN, *op.cit.*, 51.

¹⁶ By readers, I mean extra-textual people who read the Bible for the first time with general presumption. However impossible the term 'general presumption' itself, this approach is necessary to achieve sufficient closeness to Mark's implied readers. As stated above, the Gospel of Mark was evangelistic. At the end of the Gospel there was Jesus' commandment to spread the Gospel to the whole creation. In accordance with the nature of the narration and the mention of the commandment of Jesus, it should be plausible to state that Mark (implied author), as far as he taking the role of narrator mainly targeted new readers. For further study reader-response criticism of the complex liaison in Mark between real author and real readers, implied author and implied readers, there is this top-notch article of Robert M. FOWLER, "The Rhetoric of Direction and Indirection in the Gospel of Mark", in Edgar V. MCKNIGHT (ed.), *Reader Perspective of the New Testament* (Semeia 48), Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta (GA): 1989, 115-160.

¹⁷ Readers in Mark are far from omniscient. Mark guided the readers, sometimes subtly, sometimes abruptly, to gain the knowledge of who Jesus was, excitingly through events and revelations. Regarding the reader(s), Broadhead strongly suggests, "... the deeper

Without further ado Mark began to answer the questions above, commenced by introducing the preparer, the forerunner of the primary character to come. The voices supporting this primary character were strong indeed: John the Baptist, affirmed by the sayings of Isaiah himself. And the most powerful voice came from Heaven: "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." (1,11)

By above two facts, Mark put Jesus who entered the scene in verse 9 as a super-protagonist. Nobody could match a Son of God. It was no-contest since the beginning. Mark stressed out the facts to anticipate the events to come. Even if the presence of the Devil (1,12) among the beasts and the angels was introduced, the outcome of the story was definite. Who, for heaven sake, can win against a Son of God? To confirm this, Mark ingeniously nailed the coffin for any possible adversaries of Jesus with the story of a possessed man. The evil spirit through the possessed man admitted the superiority of Jesus with yet another divine title: The Holy One of God (1,23-24).

With the introduction of the minor characters such as the Devil, the angels, animals, nature, and lastly the disciples and their companions, the stage was finally set. Concerning the super-protagonist nature of Jesus, these other characters were likely to be there, in either positive and negative ways, only to serve as supporters for the completion of His mission, which was announced formally by Jesus Himself in 1,14-15. Henceforth, the story would only go a straight way to see the definite conclusion of the mission. It is interesting enough that only in this first chapter Mark used the word "euuagge,lion" with direct connection of the character of Jesus. What's more, he used the particular word in this part for exactly three times (1,1; 1,14; 1,15).

The authority of Jesus was supported not only by the external voices or factors. The facts he did had what it takes to be called Son of God was demonstrated bluntly by Mark in the stories of Jesus' act of supremacy over evil spirits (1,27; 1,33; 1,39) and sicknesses (1,31; 1,34; 1,40-42), once again we can find the use of three-times-method.

sense of the Nazarene title will be clarified only through the full impact of the narrative." Edwin K. BROADHEAD, "Jesus the Nazarene: Narrative Strategy and Christological Imagery in the Gospel of Mark", in *JSNT* 52 (1993), 8

To summarize, it is liable to say this Mark 1,1-45 was a well-thought unit of story, served as an introduction for events to come:

1. The pace of this part was made extremely fast with a lot of the adverb “ευϋqu,j” (11 times, that’s more than 25 percent of the uses throughout the Gospel).
2. The use of “three times” can be found abundantly.
3. The primary character was made evident since the beginning, and by stating the nature of Jesus with divine titles, Mark put down an impossible contest for his adversaries or the protagonists of the story. Furthermore, Jesus’ authoritative acts afterwards confirmed it. These facts presented by this particular part of the Gospel will serve as the basic point of view for any reader to begin reading the whole Gospel.
4. “Jesus’ mission was bound to succeed” would be the main theme of this first part of the Gospel of Mark.

Complication: Enter the so-called adversaries of Jesus (2,1 – 4,34)

The Devil and the evil spirits were not the adversaries. However, every story needs antagonist characters, preferably good ones. Now, who is suitable to challenge the Son of God? Reasonably, there is none. However, in this next episode of his story, Mark carefully and subtly, yet strikingly reminded the readers that what they had known wasn’t a common knowledge. While we had been told since the beginning of the nature of Jesus, the characters in the Gospel didn’t have that privilege. While the evil spirits had known (“oi=da” 1,24; 1,34) who Jesus had been, the scribes had no idea who He was. Mark indicated implicitly yet strongly this unknowing by Jesus words: “But so that you may know (eiwlh/te)...” (2,10). This episode marked the first conflict of the story. Thus, Jesus met His first so-called adversaries, for as readers we know they were by no means could stand any chance.

Conflicts in Mark 2,1-4,34:

Verses	Source of Conflict	Adversaries
2,1-12	“Your sins are forgiven.”	The scribes
2,13-17	Jesus had meal with sinners	Pharisees

	and tax collectors.	
2,18-22	About fasting.	Some people
2,23-27	About His disciples plucking heads of grain on the Sabbath.	Pharisees
3,1-6	Jesus healed a paralytic on the Sabbath.	Pharisees and Herodians
3,21	They said Jesus had gone mad.	His families
3,22	They thought Jesus had been possessed by Beelzebul.	The scribes

In complication, the story snaps into the next level. The element of suspense is magnified, place the story (events and characters) into narrative imbalance.¹⁸ Mark executed brilliantly the first tension again without hesitation. Of course, as mentioned above, the titles of Jesus and His actions as a man befitted them would not come out unchallenged, firstly by the readers and now by the characters in the bible. “Who is this man?” would be the most important question from now on.

Actions of Jesus were too high profile and immediately created divisions among His audiences. It was unavoidable for the gravity of His deeds was just too strong. By witnessing His events, people eventually ought to choose side: with or against. Besides, with His words Jesus took the polemics into another level. Jesus in Mark never hesitated to say out his mind. It was strange relating to His strict warning to the evil spirits and the healed man with leper before not to reveal who He was and what He can do. In complication, the story snaps into the next level. The element of suspense is magnified, place the story (events and characters) into narrative imbalance. Mark executed brilliantly the first tension again without hesitation. Of course, as mentioned above, the titles of Jesus and His actions as a man befitted them would not come out unchallenged, firstly by the readers and now by the characters in the bible. “Who is this man?” would be the most important question from now on. Actions of Jesus were too high profile and immediately created divisions among His audiences. Whenever He tried to remind people to keep silent about them, He failed. It was unavoidable for the gravity of His deeds was just too strong. By witnessing His events, people eventually ought to choose side: with or

¹⁸ MARGUERAT and BOURQUIN, *op.cit.*, 50.

against. Furthermore, with His words Jesus took the polemics into another level. Jesus in Mark never hesitated to say out his mind. It was strange relating to His strict warning to the evil spirits and the healed man with leper before not to reveal who He was and what He can do.

The conflicts escalated in fast pace and came into their full sense within Jesus' several interactions with the Pharisees, especially about the Sabbath which was probably the most guarded law in Jewish society.¹⁹ Repeatedly confronted by Jesus, the Pharisees lost their composure and collaborated with the Herodians they decided to destroy ("avpole,swsin") Him (3,6). The word "avpole,swsin" has a dire sense of killing with meticulous plan. The purpose of Jesus' adversaries was clear now: to murder Jesus. With this new found purpose came also the twist.

By now, the readers would have already known about the purpose of Jesus and His adversaries. The main obstacle of the proclamation of the Gospel was made clear: the plan of assassination of Jesus. Plausibly, if Jesus' mission was bound to succeed, this plan should have had to fail. Mark gave us yet another strong confirmation of who Jesus was, immediately after the disclosure of the assassination plan. The evil spirits in 1,11 testified again, "You are the Son of God!"

Jesus' families were among the adversaries because they intended to take Jesus (3,21). Despite their good intentions out of their concern towards Jesus, their action was not in accordance with His mission. To stress this out Jesus said afterwards, "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." (3,35)

Aside the adversaries, there ought to be some supporters, too. Among the supporters, the closest ones would be the disciples. To them Jesus told secrets exclusively (4,11; 4,34). Therefore, they were supposed to have more knowledge about Him. Nevertheless, among them there was also Judas Iscariot, which would make the betrayal of the ages (3,19).

From this part there are some facts to be taken account of:

1. Hitherto, there were distinguishable groups with reference to their knowledge of Jesus:
 - a. The author.
 - b. Readers: know the most after the author, from the beginning and the developments of the story.

¹⁹ See Herold WEISS, "The Sabbath in the Synoptic Gospels", in *JSNT* 38 (1990), 13-27.

- c. Evil spirits: they knew and testified that Jesus is the Holy One of God and later, the Son of God.
 - d. The disciples: they were being told by Jesus in secret more than the commoners.
 - e. The others (people at large, Jesus' adversaries): to them Jesus only spoke in parables. Other than that, they could only recognize Him from His actions and what other people said about Him.
2. This part is a unit because of following reasons:
 - a. Character-wise nothing new was revealed about Jesus, aside of His interactions with His adversaries and supporters.
 - b. The first block of Jesus' teachings (4,1-34) was still in context of the difference between the knowledge of the disciples and that of the commoners.
 3. It seems Mark intended to stress out the importance of knowledge about Jesus and His mission. However, even for the readers the true nature of Jesus' mission is yet to be revealed.

Transformative Actions: Jesus, the Lord of All (4,35 – 8,30)

In Transformative Action, the story offers the steps to surpass the obstacle(s) emerged in the former stage. However, the overcoming itself is yet to come. The setting and characters at this stage by now are revealed almost completely, leaving just enough for the solution and finale. This is the turning point of the events, where everything should have already taken their respectful places. In this stage there are more changes and developments which will determine the end of the story.²⁰

After a long discourse in 4,1-34, the story evolved with new interesting developments. First of all, Jesus control over nature. In accounts of the Bible, there were only two persons who might have the similar authority over nature, Moses and Elijah. However, what Jesus did was surpassing even theirs. Moses had needed an action to divide the sea (Ex 14,21), Jesus needed only His word. Elijah had prayed for the fire to come down from heaven (1Kgs 18,36-38), Jesus acted by His own authority.

The second one, closely related to the first, was the first indication of the ignorance of the disciples. Even after some private and intensive

²⁰ MARGUERAT and BOURQUIN, *op.cit.*, 51-52.

lessons, they failed to realize who Jesus really was. It was shown by their extreme fear. “And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, ‘Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?’” (4,41). This NRS translation didn’t do enough justice to the original expression “*evfobh,qhsan fo,bon me,gan*”, which would be better translated into “feared a great terror”. It was like their eyes were just being opened for the first time. They just realized within their hearts that Jesus might not be the one they thought He would be.

The third one was Jesus proclamation to go across to the other side “*die,lqwmēn eivj to pe,ranā*” Guelich annotated perfectly that nothing was said about the trip.²¹ “Go to the other side” might simply mean “go to the other place”, or context-wise, “go to the other shore” of the lake (5,1). However, Collins and Attridge reminded us that this was the first-time Jesus left Galilee since 1,9. By this spatial reference, the story moved towards another episode, despite the fact it happened “on that day, when evening had come”. Moreover, the place they were going was land of the Gerasenes, where Jesus cast away demons to enter a group of swine. Jewish people did not eat swine. This notion indicated strongly that at that time Jesus was among the gentiles;²² and, as demonstrated by Wefald, it was the first of four of His journeys towards the territory of the gentiles: (1) to Gerasa 5,1; (2) to Bethsaida 6,45: aborted, (3) to Tyre and Sidon, and then Decapolis 7,24; (4) and lastly, to Bethsaida and Caesarea Philippi 8,22.27.²³

Jesus’ authority over nature reaffirmed His divine nature. As if it wasn’t sufficient, Mark demonstrated once more testimony from the evil spirits, the Legion. This time for sure, they knew who Jesus was by shouting out, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God (*Ἰησοῦ/ υἱὲ τοῦ/ θεοῦ τοῦ/ υἱοῦ τοῦ*)” (5,7) Hereafter, the mysterious power of Jesus, even though the readers wouldn’t be so surprised of it, would only escalate; and along with that, the controversies surrounding Him.

The next thing he did was genuinely extraordinary. He raised someone from death! This kind of story was unheard since Elijah (1Kgs 17,7-

²¹ R.A. GUELICH, *Mark 1-8:26* (Word Biblical Commentary), Word Inc., Dallas (TX) 2002, 264.

²² A.Y. COLLINS & H.W. ATTRIDGE, *op.cit.*, 258.

²³ E.K. WEFALD, “The Separate Gentile Mission in Mark: A Narrative Explanation of Markan Geography, the Two Feeding Accounts and Exorcisms”, in *JSNT* 60 (1995), 9-13.

24) and Elisha (2Kgs 4,8-37). However, what Jesus did was even more spectacular than what the two prophets had done. While the two prophets had prayed to God for the miracle, Jesus did it by His own authority (5,21-24.35-43). The in-between or intercalated²⁴ story of the woman with hemorrhages (5,25-34) might be not as impressive as the resurrection but still very compelling. It displayed the enormity of power of Jesus that manifested even only through His cloak.

His displays of wonders didn't seem to impress His townsfolk and families (6,1-6a). Jesus Himself was awestruck by their incredulity, although He knew well what the reason was. Leaving that be, He visited other villages and started to do another interesting thing. He sent His disciples to proclaim repentance. The surprise was the disciples were granted the power to exorcise and to heal as well.

The story of the mission of the disciples was interrupted by the story of John the Baptist. It seemed out of place. Why did Mark put this story here? The flow of the story would be more fluid if the story continue immediately with 6,30. Especially, when in original Greek of 6,14, Mark only use the pronoun "αὐτοῦ" to refer to Jesus. "Καὶ ἡκούσεν ὁ βασιλεὺς ἡρώδης τὸ φησὶν αὐτοῦ". Most of the modern translations are bound to add the name "Jesus" to make the change of setting doesn't have to sound too abrupt. By the story of the death of John the Baptist, Mark seemingly wanted to raise again the connection of Jesus to him, Elijah and the other prophets (cf. 14,14-15). In addition, in context of the mission of the disciples, Mark probably wanted to make an early comparison between the disciples of John the Baptist and the disciples of Jesus. While the mission of the disciples of John ended at the same time of his death, the disciples of Jesus had the power and novelty to carry on the mission, even after the death of Jesus.

Once the disciples returned from their mission, Jesus asked them to go to a quiet place where they could be alone. However, the plan was disrupted by a great crowd. He was moved by compassion and began to

²⁴ Intercalation, according to Scott G. Brown, is "a means of conspicuously juxtaposing two episodes or pericopae". In Mark the technique of intercalation was used quite frequently. At least there were six generally recognized intercalations in 3,20-35; 5,21-43; 6,7-32; 11,12-25; 14,1-11; and 14,53-72. Scott G. BROWN, "Mark 11:1-12:12: A Triple Intercalation?", in *CBQ* 64 (2002), 78.

teach them (6,30-34). After a while they all needed to eat. It was beyond the knowledge of the disciples what Jesus would do. Yet again Mark evidently linked this event of Jesus to the events of Elijah and Elisha. While Elijah had been a man in charge for the replication of the flour and oil (1Kgs 17,14-16) and Elisha had been feeding one hundred men with the replication of bread, Jesus did something more. He fed five thousands men with the replication of five loaves of bread and two fish. They even had abundant leftovers after the meal.

The miraculous meal was followed by Jesus' ascent of a mountain to spend a quality time in prayer. Before went alone to pray, Jesus commanded His disciples to go by boat first to Bethsaida. When their boat was at the middle of the lake, Jesus reaffirmed once more His control over nature by His walking on the water (6,45-52). Instead of parting the water, Jesus decided to simply walk on it. This episode exposed once more the ignorance of the disciples. Even after watching all the wonders Jesus had done, they still couldn't cast away their fear and confusion of Him. Mark marked it accurately stating: "...for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened." (6,52) Somehow the journey to Bethsaida was cancelled and they landed at Gennesaret instead.

Jesus' fame was enormous and He lived up to His fame. Many people came to Him bringing the sick people, and they all were healed, even only by touching His garment. Up until now, Jesus in Mark was shown as a man as great as the greatest of prophets, and yet even greater than them. He was a prophet on a different level. He could forgive sins (2,10). He was even above the Sabbath (2,28). With this statement Jesus put Himself above the customs interpreted by the Jews, and he sealed up the reason of His superiority over the customs with the second block of discourse in 7,1-23. Commandments of God should be treated above the law and customs of the ancestors. As a prominent prophet and the Son of God, known by the readers, Jesus renewed the interpretations of the Commandments of God with authority. To believe in Him was to believe these interpretations of the Commandments of God. Unfortunately, as we would know later, the Pharisees and the scribes chose to be on the other side.

His journey to Tyre and Sidon and especially the episode with the Syrophenician woman opened up the possibilities for the gentiles to believe in Him. The Gospel was to be spread even among the gentiles.

These verses anticipated the commandment of Jesus to spread the Gospel to the whole world (16,8b.15-20).

Slowly but sure, Mark had set the story for the climax. The rift between Jesus and His opponents was becoming wider and wider, while the relationship between Jesus and his disciples wasn't going anywhere. After another great wonders of multiplications of the loaves, the Pharisees still couldn't get themselves convinced. Ironically, His disciples still didn't possessed satisfying faith in Jesus, either. They kept misunderstand Him on the level that made Jesus had to say, "Do you still not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened?" (8,17b). That's about when Peter stood up to save the day.

Notably, Mark mentioned healing stories of a deaf at Decapolis (7,31-37) and a blind at Bethsaida (8,22-26) prior to the bold confession of Peter. Geographical-wise these two accounts were exclusively Mark's. Probably these had to do with the deafness and the blindness of the heart (4,12). Only by the healing of deafness and blindness of heart, the disciples represented by Peter could come to a decent conclusion, "You are the Messiah." (8,29).

Solution: Exit the so-called triumphant adversaries of Jesus (8,31 – 15,47)

Solution is the symmetric stage of the complication. It states the solution of the problem(s) revealed in the complication. It describes the effects of the transformative actions upon the characters. In solution the conflicts are put to rest by definite results. In suspense novels, the solution usually reveals some plot-twists.²⁵ The results are made unpredictable for the excitement of the readers.

As mentioned above, the readers in Mark should have been aware of the sure-win situation of the super-protagonist of the story. However, Mark as a good story-teller still had something up his sleeve to make a twist that could surprise even the best observant reader.

The first twist of the event was Jesus' honest announcement that He would have to undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again (8,31).

²⁵ MARGUERAT and BOURQUIN, *op.cit.*, 51.

The elders (“tw/n presbute,rwn”) and the chief priests (“oi avrcierei/j”) were announced for the first time as Jesus’ potential adversaries. This was a great deal concerning their strategist position in Jewish society.²⁶ Schubert resumed it accurately that Jesus self-understanding at this point would only lead Him to opposition to the established order. Confrontation, he continued, with political power was unavoidable.²⁷

Understandably, his disciples were shocked. Peter, who might still thinking of representing his acquaintances, took Him aside to rebuke Him only to be scolded by Jesus. Knowing about Jesus’ divinity, the readers might have been taken aback by this surprising turn of event as well. They knew the plan of God would succeed. However, until now the plan was concealed. They would never have guessed that the plan were to let Jesus be killed by His adversaries. This awful plan was made clear and confirmed by the next event on the mountain. Even though there was no description of what Jesus was talking about with Elijah and Moses, Jesus’ statements afterwards implied it. He talked about His resurrection from among the dead (9,9). He talked about Elijah who needed to come first (9,11-12.13). He talked about Son of Man who to went through many sufferings and be treated with contempt (9,12). Everything to be fulfilled as He said for the voice from within the cloud²⁸ had said, “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!” (9,7)

After another display of His superiority over evil spirit (9,14-28) – in this story a new element of prayer was introduced regarding exorcism – for the second time Jesus told the disciples about His suffering, death, and resurrection (9,30-31). The disciples were still having a lot of difficulties to understand the message, but they were too afraid to ask Him about it (9,32).

By the second announcement of His passion, Mark began the third block of the discourse of Jesus. Another riddle to be solved was given by Jesus to the disciples by saying, “Whoever wants to be first must be last of

²⁶ Cf. Joachim JEREMIAS, *Jerusalen en tiempos de Jesus, estudio economic y social del mundo del Nuevo Testamento*, Ediciones Cristiandad, Madrid 1977, 179-216; 239-248.

²⁷ K. SCHUBERT, “Biblical Criticism Criticized: with Reference to the Markan Report of Jesus’s (sic.) Examination before the Sanhedrin”, in Ernst Bammel and C.F.D. Moule (eds.), *Jesus and Politics of His Day*, Cambridge University Press, London 1984, 396.

²⁸ Cloud in the OT often accompanied the presence of God. Cf. Ex 19,9; 24,26; 33,9; Num 12,5; 14,4; Deut 31,15; 1Kgs 8,11, etc.

all and servant of all.” (9,35) Some of these discourses could be found also in other synoptic Gospels, especially Matthew, but not always in same order. Plot-wise this block didn’t seem to contribute anything in particular. Nevertheless, there were some serious novelties in Jesus’ teachings, namely the dire sins of those misleading the faithful children (9,42), the famous so-called ‘mutilation’ discourse (9,43-48), teaching about marriage and divorce (10,1-12), “there is almost no place in heaven for rich people” (10,17-27), and the benefits of becoming His followers (10,28-31).

After the third announcement of Jesus’ passion (10,32-34), Mark ended this block of discourse by an exclusive dialogue between Jesus and the twelve. In this conversation, Jesus’ message about the servant nature of his followers in 9,35 was repeated. These two messages were given after the respective second and third announcement of His passion, possibly implying the ever-connection between His passion and the ministries of his disciples. To become the first were to become the slave of all (10,44).

The story of Bartimaeus, which came after the discourses, shed another light between the faith and blindness (cf. 10,52). It was better to become blind physically than spiritually. This story of the healing of a blind person set a new episode of Jesus’ journey, His ultimate journey anticipated by His three announcements before. There were people healed from their blindness, but there were always another group of people choosing to remain in blindness, even though the light had been offered to them.

Jesus entered Jerusalem as a king, seen as the representation of David by the crowd (11,9-10). In Jerusalem, the first place He went to was the Temple (11,11). Then, he went outside to Bethany and spent a night with the twelve. In the morning they went back to Jerusalem. On their way, Jesus condemned a fig tree (11,14), setting the stage for His discourse later. At the Temple of Jerusalem Jesus made a ruckus. He drove out the merchants and buyers in the Temple, overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of the dove-sellers, and forbid everyone to carry things through the Temple (11,15-16). Moreover, He claimed doing all those things in the name of God by citing Isaiah (Is 56,7) and Jeremiah (Jer 7,11). This action caused the chief priests, prophesized by Jesus before, and the scribes to turn out immediately against Him. They tried to find a way to kill Him, but were afraid of the crowd supporting Jesus (11,18). From that moment on, they would be lurking around the corner setting conspiracies

with the other adversaries of Jesus to kill Him (cf. 12,12-13; 14,1; 14,10; 14,43-63).

The next morning, in their way from Bethany to Jerusalem, they saw the condemned fig tree had withered away to its roots. This was again one of the showcases of Jesus' authority over the nature. Jesus utilized the opportunity to begin His discourse about the faith factor in prayer that somehow had to do with the act of forgiving (11,20-25). This exclusive discourse was followed by the longest block of discourses in Mark (11,27-13,37).

Despite the nature of discourses, there were some interesting plot developments being put here and there in Mark 11,27-13,37. Remarkably, Mark kept the tension building throughout the discourses. In Mark 11,27 another potent adversaries of Jesus appeared. They were the elders ("tw/n presbute,rwn"). Together with the chief priests and the scribes (12,12), and later on the Pharisees and Herodians (12,13, cf. 3,6), they collaborated to destroy Jesus. The sources of conflicts here were somehow different from those before. With the Pharisees in the early chapters, Jesus confronted them in themes of customs, such as honoring the Sabbath and washing hands. Here the dialogues were arguably more intense and heavy, regarding the doctrines of: relation between state and religion (12,13-17), resurrection (12,18-27), the most important commandment of all (12,28-34), and the connection between Jesus and David (12,35-37). Jesus won all the discussions, making Him more favorable by the crowd, but at the same time more enviable and detestable by His adversaries. Up to this point, the only two solutions of the conflicts, made possible by the plot, would be the vanishing of Jesus or His succession to a political throne to handle His strong adversaries.

Knowing that His time was going to come, Jesus gathered His closest ones, Peter, James, John, and Andrew, disclosing things to come, from the destruction of the Temple (13,1-2) to the end of time (13,3-35). There would be a lot of sufferings and persecutions. There would be false Messiahs. His message to all, not only to those four was, "Keep awake (grhgorei/te)!" (13,37).

The story quickly turned perilous for Jesus for the adversaries were drawing near to kill Him (14,1-2). Jesus Himself was being prepared by anointment from a woman as an anticipation of His burial (14,8) and by the

Passover meal with His disciples (14,12-25). At last by the treacherous betrayal of Judas Iscariot (14,10-11), the chief priests along with other adversaries of Jesus found a good opportunity to capture Jesus, in the moment and place where He wasn't surrounded by many people. Eventually, in this garden of Gethsemane, the adversaries of Jesus already held for themselves the moment of triumph for Jesus was now in their hand (14,43-52.53-65).

The narrative of this part of the Gospel was quite complicated yet intriguing, colored by the use of intersperse method of dynamic entrances and departures of the characters (next page):²⁹

²⁹ This approach of entrances and exits of the characters, if utilized appropriately, can achieve a deep analysis of the plot and characters of the story. Cf. J.F. Fokkelman, *Come leggere un racconto biblico, Guida pratica alla Narrativa biblica*, Centro editorial dehoniano, Bologna 2002, 101-104.

14,1-2	The plan to capture and to murder Jesus	Exit Jesus and His disciples Enter the chief priests and the scribes
14,3-9	Jesus anointed by a woman as anticipation of His burial	Exit the chief priests and the scribes Enter Jesus Enter a woman and some other people
14,10-11	Judas Iscariot promise to hand over (“paradoi”) Jesus to the chief priests	Exit Jesus , the woman, and the people Enter Judas Iscariot Enter the chief priests
14,12-25	The Passover meal	Exit the chief priests (Judas remained on scene) Enter Jesus and the eleven
14,26-32	Jesus’ prediction of Peter’s denial	
14,33-42	Jesus prayed in agony; the advice to stay awake and pray	Exit Judas Iscariot and the other disciples, except Peter, James, and John.
14,43-52	Jesus was captured	Enter Judas Iscariot with the crowd sent by the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders; and all the disciples, including a young man.
14,53-65	The trial of Jesus in front of Sanhedrin	Exit all disciples of Jesus, except Peter, but he stayed outside at the courtyard <i>at a distance</i> . Exit Judas Iscariot and company (?) Enter the High Priest. Enter all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes.

In this part of the story, only two times was Jesus out of the scene. The first time was when the story setting changed to close up to His adversaries, namely the chief priests and the scribes. However, to say Jesus was completely out of scene would not be correct because everything they were discussing about had had already been predicted by Jesus

beforehand. The same thing goes for the second time. Everything Judas Iscariot did in secret was never out-of-radar to Jesus. He knew Judas was going to hand Him over to His adversaries (14,17-21; 14,42). In short, Jesus was in control of the events. He knew each and every second of the events. He was the Lord of the events since the beginning and never let things out of His control. He was not only the Lord of the sicknesses, evil spirits, or nature. He was the Lord of His own destiny as well. Jesus let Himself be captured and at the end died upon the cross for He understood that was the cup His Abba had prepared for Him (14,36).

Jesus' moments of agony unfortunately didn't get consolations from any of His beloved ones. He was left alone every time He cried in pain, every time He had to face His adversaries. No one defended Him. No one stayed by His side. Jesus in Mark suffered and died alone. His disciples and followers only followed Him at a distance³⁰ (Peter in 14,54 and several female followers in 15,40). Why? The best reason should be as Jesus said: their faith on Him was in tumult to the level of willing to neglect or desert Him completely (14,27: "skanda*li*,zw"). Before the resurrection, the faith of the disciples in Mark never reached the level where they would not be surprised by any disturbance. Their knowledge of Jesus wasn't enough to support such a faith. Jesus' last episode in Gethsemane still displayed the ignorance of His disciples, notably three closest disciples. They failed to notice Jesus' fear and terror. Mark's account of their last disposition before Jesus was captured illustrated their ignorance about Jesus and what was going to happen to Him, "And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know ("ouv*k h|deisan*") what to say to him." Mark used the pluperfect form of "oi=da" probably to stress out the fact they genuinely had had no idea what was going on until that moment.

One might argue that Pilate stood by Jesus' side during His agony. Mark told us about His 'defenses' favoring Jesus. Three times he tried to free Jesus. However, the fact he gave Him to be tortured and then crucified, shown that Pilate was never on Jesus' side. At first, he just wanted to make sure he didn't crucify an innocent man. But at the end, he didn't really care

³⁰ The intercalation technique in 14,53-72 was used by Mark here, probably to stress out the solitude of Jesus being abandoned by "all His disciples". See the explanation of the purpose of intercalation in Scott G. BROWN, *op.cit.*, 78-79.

about Jesus, because he chose to satisfy the crowd rather than to let Jesus go (15,15).

With the torture and the crucifixion, Jesus' death was getting close. He reached out to heaven shouting, "elwi elwi lema sabacqani³¹" in Aramaic which meant, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (15,33) The phrase indicated His solitude and solstice. How great was the exclamation! Yet, He prevailed and then abandoned His spirit (15,37).

The death of Jesus was followed by the curtain of the Temple being torn in two, from top to bottom. The centurion, watching the death of Jesus at around 3 o'clock in the afternoon, admitted that He was truly Son of God ("ui'o,j qeou", 15,39). In Mark, it wasn't clear what made him say that. Probably, it was because of the darkness since twelve o'clock. Matthew however, added account of earthquake and splitting rocks (Mt 27,51). Either way, the acknowledgement was the first coming from a human person without any influence of evil spirit(s). Ironically, it came from a roman soldier, an outsider.

The exclamation of the centurion made the readers aware again that the story was about the Jesus Christ, Son of God, the super-protagonist since the beginning (1,1). While the title "Christ" of Jesus had been acknowledged by Peter, now His other title, "Son of God" was recognized by the centurion, another human being.³² The circle was completed, strangely by the death of Jesus on cross, which was supposed to give Him the greatest humiliation. The title "Son of God", a man fully bound with God, had more general sense compared with "Messiah/Christ". As it had

³¹ The spelling "elwi" is transliterated from "yhil'a" in Aramaic, while "hli" in Mt 27,46 represents "ylia" in Hebrew. Equally, "lema" goes with the Aramaic "am'l.", but "lama" in Mt 27,46 represents Hebrew "hml". METZGER, *op.cit.*, 58.

³² Philip G. Davis goes on further saying it is evident that the centurion's confession is not only the Narrative climax of the Second Gospel but the Christological climax as well. With that, he concludes, the divine-human dichotomy is overcome by the man who is truly the Son of God. As sound as his arguments go, I failed to agree with the dichotomy proposal throughout his article. The narrative power of Gospel of Mark, if the reader would read it without pretension, left the reader aware of what Mark had wanted since the beginning. His vision of Jesus would only be strengthened by His actions and words, and with His affection, as we will come to in the next chapter. The dichotomy, if there was one, could only be traced from the ignorance of the characters within the Gospel, especially that of Jesus' closest observers, His disciples. Cf. Philip G. DAVIS, "Mark's Christological Paradox", in *JNT* 35 (1989), 3-18.

been more appropriate for Peter as a representation of the disciples and the Jewish community to approve the messianic nature of Jesus, it was appropriate for the centurion, represented gentiles and people in general, to admit Jesus as the Son of God. He was not only the Messiah crucified, but the crucified Son of God.³³

With the death of Jesus, His adversaries might have felt victorious. Jesus was dead, definitely. He was then buried. Mary Magdalene and Mary, mother of Joseph, witnessed where His body was laid (15,47). The conflict seemed to end here. This was a perfect solution for Jesus' adversaries. Even so, the readers of Mark know better. It was all in accordance with Jesus' plan as the Son of God. In fact, there was never a chance for them to begin with. The next part would reveal the real conclusion of the story.

Final situation: Exit Jesus to sit down at the right hand of God
(16,1-16,20)

To propose the Shorter and Longer Ending of Mark is risky. The debates around them are anything but simple. As stated by Metzger, both external and internal analysis of the text Mk 16,8b and Mk 16,9-20 provide strong evidences that they weren't exist in the original Gospel and thus, weren't written by the original author. Both the Shorter Ending and Longer Ending were missing in oldest Greek manuscripts a and B, and hundreds of other manuscripts. Thus, the Gospel in these manuscripts ended with "evfobou/nto ga,r". The oldest Latin manuscript *Codex Bobiensis* (k) contained only the shorter ending. Furthermore, Clemens of Alexandria and Origen showed no knowledge of these verses. From the primary uncials of the NT, only W from the fifth century preserved both endings, with apocryphal expansion between verses 14 and 15.³⁴ Even the shorter ending (16,8b) didn't match the context of the text prior to it, unless the six final words of chapter 8a ("kai ouvdeni ouvde.n ei=pan\ evfobou/nto ga,r") was to be omitted, those declared the subjects said nothing, because they were afraid.³⁵

³³ For great analysis of the different meaning and interrelation between "Messiah" and "Son of God" please read Martin HENGEL, *The Cross of the Son of God*, SCM Press, London 1976.

³⁴ METZGER, *op.cit*, 102-103.

³⁵ *Codex Bobiensis* (k) did omit the six words.

Metzger continued to argue that was also evident that in the Longer Ending there were many vocabularies found nowhere else in the Mark, such as *avpiste,w(bla,ptw(bebaio,w(evpakolouqe,w(qea,omai(metatau/ta(poreu,omai(sunerge,w(u[steron*. In addition, the accounts of the disciples were mourning (16,10: “*toi/j metV auvtou/ genome,noij penqou/si kaiklai,ousin*”) and they would not be hurt by drinking any deadly thing (16,18) can be found nowhere else in the Bible. The other strong reason to believe that 16,9-20 and also 16,8b were expansions, according to Metzger, was that the connection between 16,8a and them was too awkward.³⁶

The fact that there was a plot flaw between 16,8 and 16,9-20 cannot be denied. And yet, as France denotes, “the almost unanimous conclusion of modern scholarship is that both the Shorter and Longer Endings, in their different ways, represent well-meaning attempts, probably sometime in the second century, to fill the perceived gap left by the ‘unfinished’ ending at 16:8,...”³⁷ Supported by A. Black, the Longer Ending might have been existed since the second century.³⁸ It was based on indications that Irenaeus³⁹ and probably Tatian with his *Diatesseron*⁴⁰ (harmonious of the four Gospels) in the late second century might have some knowledge of all or at least some of these verses. Even before, Justin Martyr,⁴¹ as mentioned by Metzger, excerpted five words that appear in 16,20, although in a different sequence. With its term of antiquity, its importance to the tradition of the Gospel, and its well-meaning materials, Metzger accounted that the Committee⁴² decided to include vv. 9-20 (as well as the Shorter Ending) as part of the text, but to put them between square brackets to indicate that they were not the work of the original author of Mark.⁴³

³⁶ METZGER, *op.cit*, 104.

³⁷ R.T. FRANCE, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, W.B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids (MI) 2002, 687.

³⁸ A. BLACK, *Mark* (The College Press NIV Commentary), College Press, Joplin (MO) 1995, comment on Mk 16,19.

³⁹ IRENAEUS, *Against Heresies*, 3,10,6.

⁴⁰ TATIAN, *Diatesseron*, 55,5-11.

⁴¹ JUSTIN MARTYR, *Apology*, 1,45.

⁴² Editorial Committee of the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament.

⁴³ METZGER, *op.cit*, 105-106.

Whether 16,9-20 was written by the original author or wasn't, the structure of Mark 16,1-20 as a whole somehow created concentric structure with the beginning of the Gospel:

<i>John the Baptist, the Forerunner</i>	A		
Enter Jesus, Son of God		B	
<i>The spiritual entities, desert, disciples and companions</i>			C
<i>The episodes in-between</i>			D
<i>The empty tomb, a young man, companions and disciples</i>			C'
Exit Jesus to sit down at the right hand of God		B'	
<i>The disciples, the Successors</i>	A'		

As annotated by France, the Shorter and Longer Ending served to give a better ending of the story. Plot-wise and structure-wise, this Longer Ending serves a better final situation for the Gospel. With 16,1-8 serves the purpose of finalizing of some of the most important themes in the Gospel, namely: (1) The resurrection of Jesus (16,1-8), (2) the continuation of Jesus' mission through His disciples and also believers (16,8b.20), (3) Jesus' return as the true Son of God (16,19), (4) the true meaning of the Gospel: the eternal salvation (16,8b).

CONTEXT AND UNITY OF Mk 4,35-8,30

Mark 4,35-8,30, as analyzed above, serves to demonstrate the “turning points” of the events. The Initial Situation and Complication anticipated the Transformative Action(s) which drove the story into its end. From the Initial derived the sense of divinity surrounding the main protagonist and the Complication gave witnesses of His divine authorities. Subsequently, as annotated as well in the Complication, there would be people questioning His authorities, especially over traditions such as Sabbath.

Mark 4,35-8,30 was a new part of the Gospel as well as a unit of story because of some reasonable reasons. First of all, by demonstrating Transformative Action(s), this part of the story established strongly Jesus' image as special person surpassing even the biggest prophets of old.

Because of His divine self-presentations, the people supporting Him would see Him as prophet or beyond. At the other end, the people confronting Him would come to call Him a blasphemer. His actions, however, brought about authority to His teachings as well. In 7,1-23 indirectly Jesus stated the foundation of all His mission. It was the Commandment of God.

The Commandment of God, Jesus stressed, is above all else, above each and every law made by men. Things taught by the Pharisees and the scribes, namely: honoring the Sabbath, washing hand ritual, “*korbaḥ*”, and unclean animals,⁴⁴ had only been regulations set by human. All these, according to Jesus, were becoming merely religious displays without concerning their innermost value, i.e. the Commandment of God. It was in vain to do all those religious rituals if the heart was far from God and filled with bad things (cf. 7,6-7.21-23). With this Jesus asserted that the value of an act, or in this context, the offering (“*korbaḥ*”), was purely depended on what’s within the heart.

Mark 4,35-8,30 also contained Jesus’ four journeys towards the territories of gentiles. These journeys and then the commission of His disciples in 6,6b-12 anticipated His command in 16,15-16 to proclaim the Gospel to the whole nation. Later this openness to the Gentiles will lead to great conversions of nations, while, ironically the refusals from Jesus’ townsfolk and the adversaries in this part will lead to their skepticism towards the Gospel and climaxing in the crucifixion of Jesus.

Not only His families and adversaries, His closer disciples, with whom He spent more quality time, had great difficulty to understand who He was. The ignorance of Jesus’ disciples was shown frequently in the Gospel of Mark. It was shown first the episode of the storm in 4,35-41 and culminated in Jesus’ grievance in 8,14-21. However, the ignorance of the disciples would not be the same as the adversaries, thanks to Peter’s confession representing the disciples, “You are Messiah!” (8,29) This

⁴⁴ Regarding the unclean food, it was a very serious theme in the OT. An elder and likewise a mother and her seven sons chose not to eat any unclean food forced by their adversaries even if they had to die because of that (2Mac 6-7). However, the deeper reason wasn’t lie on the unclean food *per se*, but on the coercion to apostasy. The unclean food here was treated as a formal display of apostasy, which was based on the internal-belief. This explanation, however, was only a simplistic one derived from the study of Walter HOUSTON, *Purity and Monotheism, Clean and Unclean Animals in Biblical Law*, JSOT Press, Sheffield 1993, 218-282.

confession was so significant that Jesus thought it was time for them to know the true nature of His mission, marking the beginning of the conclusive episodes in the Gospel of Mark.

CONCLUSIONS

From the discussions above, some conclusions can be offered:

1. It seems that Mark's purpose(s) of writing his Gospel was indicated since the beginning: to tell the readers why Jesus was the Christ and the Son of God. If the readers to take part with this purpose, the definite approval for the nature of Jesus as Christ would come from Peter 8,29. As for the model praise for His Son of God title would come from a Roman centurion in 15,39.
2. It was clear Jesus was the main character, or better, the super-protagonist of the story. The other characters, even His adversaries, were there to only to serve the completion of Jesus' mission.
3. Conflicts were due to happen because of high-profile nature of Jesus' ministries and teachings, especially political conflicts with the rulers of Jewish community.
4. His mission was only made clear quite deep into the story, respectably 8,31. Shockingly, the mission included parts where Jesus had to suffer and die on the cross.
5. Because the mission of the Son of God was bound to be successful, at the end, the readers were expected to come to accept that the cross didn't have to contradict Jesus' nature as the Messiah and the Son of God.⁴⁵
6. Mark 4,35-8,30 contains some turning-point-events or turning-point-teachings which led the story into the fulfillment of the mission of Jesus:
 - a. The demonstration of Jesus' miracles beyond those of the prophets, indicating the divinity of Jesus.
 - b. The universal nature of the Gospel proclaimed by Jesus, and then, by His disciples.
 - c. The internalization of the Commandment of God. There were more to the commandment than merely rituals and traditions.

⁴⁵ At this point, I come to understand Gundry's basic proposal that the whole Gospel of Mark was simply a big apology of why Jesus had to die on cross. Robert H. GUNDRY, *op.cit.*, 1.

The intention and the disposition of heart were the most important of all.

- d. The ignorance of the disciples saved by Peter's confession.

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