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The Exodus Motif in the Gospel of Mark

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Declaration

This thesis is my own work, and no part of it has been previously submitted to Durham University or any other institution for a degree.

Acknowledgements

Durham University seems to run in my family. My parents met and married as Durham students and both my sisters went on to follow in their footsteps. Having grown up myself amidst Durham's 'mixed and massive piles',[1] I was delighted to have the chance in 2022 to join the Department of Theology and Religion for a one-year MA by research. My already high hopes of the University were exceeded in every way. I would particularly like to thank my supervisor, Professor Francis Watson, who gave so generously of his time throughout the year and showed remarkable patience with the painfully rough early drafts of this thesis. Thank you also to Dr Jane Heath for her coordination of the weekly New Testament seminars and her extensive help with my applications for doctoral study.

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[1] An extract from Sir Walter Scott's poem *Harold the Dauntless*, engraved on Prebends Bridge in Durham.

Abstract

This dissertation aims to demonstrate the *prominent* and *multifaceted* use of the exodus motif in Mark.

Chapters 1 and 2 will examine the exodus motif in the beginning of the gospel, focusing on the opening citation and the wilderness setting in the early chapters. Here, it will be argued, the exodus is *recapitulated* in the life and ministry of Jesus.

Chapters 3 and 4 will move to the middle of the gospel, exploring the exodus language at the heart of the transfiguration and Jesus' journey along 'the way' towards Jerusalem. It will be shown that the exodus motif is *inverted* in this central section. This new exodus journey ends not in triumph but tragedy, not with conquest but a cross.

Chapters 5 and 6 will examine the exodus motif at the end of the gospel, focusing on the Passover framework and the torn temple veil. Here, it will be maintained, the exodus is *superseded* by a greater redemptive act.

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Introduction

In 1861, French musician Jean-Baptiste Arban composed *Le Carnaval de Venise,* one of the most complex trumpet solos ever written. Surprisingly, this musical masterpiece was inspired by a simple Neapolitan folk song. The traditional melody features in a variety of ways. At times it appears clearly on the surface, apparent even to the casual listener. At times it is half submerged, difficult to distinguish amidst a swirl of other notes. At times it is completely abandoned as Arban, drawing on other influences, takes the music in an unexpected direction.

This thesis will argue that the exodus motif is Mark's 'folk song'. There are times when the age-old melody rises to the surface, for example in the opening citation or the transfiguration. There are sections where its familiar sound, half hidden, can be picked out only by the careful listener, for example in Mark's wilderness topology or references to 'the way'. There are several occasions where Mark abandons the theme and draws on other textual material, for example Daniel's Son of man or the anguish of the suffering Psalmist. Yet throughout the complexity and dynamism of this short gospel, the reader is repeatedly brought back to the familiar sounds of the exodus motif.

Just like Arban, however, Mark freely adapts this exodus folk song. The exultant notes of the exodus, ringing out in the opening chapters, are soon transposed into a minor key as Jesus chooses the way not of glory but of death. The transfiguration and journey to Jerusalem in the central chapters, it will be argued, present an inverted version of the exodus unfamiliar even to Jesus' closest disciples. As the gospel reaches its crescendo in the final chapters, the exodus again takes on a new form, moving to the background as it is superseded by an altogether new refrain.

Literature Review

'Mark follows [Matthew] closely, and appears to be his attendant and abbreviator'.[2] Augustine's portrayal of Mark in *De Consensu Evangeliorum* is indicative - if not causal - of a low view of the gospel that pervaded successive centuries. Why study Mark if a fuller account of Jesus' life could be found in the other synoptic gospels? This attitude changed with the dawn of source criticism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Evidence that Mark was not an abridged but an original account prompted a surge of interest in the gospel. Despite this renewed emphasis on Mark, however, surprisingly little work was done on the gospel's use of the Old Testament.[3] Several factors may have contributed towards this. Unlike the other gospels, there is only one editorial citation formula in the whole of Mark, found in the opening verses. Not only this, but the bulk of the scriptural references are, as Vorster observes, 'so embedded into the story that, if it were not for […] a knowledge of the Old Testament, the reader would not have noticed [the…] allusion or quotation.'[4] This subtlety is compounded by the composite nature of several Old Testament references, characterised by Kee as a 'synthesising' or 'juxtaposing' of disparate texts that obscures their original source.[5] The opening citation (Mk 1:2-3) and the anticipation of the Son of man's return (Mk 13:24-26) are just two of several instances where a fusion of disparate Old Testament passages continues to generate debate amongst scholars as to the specific source texts.

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[2] Augustine, *De consensu evangeliorum*, 1.ii.4 (own translation): 'Marcus eum subsecutus tamquam pedisequus et breviator ejus videtur'

[3] Despite its anachronistic character, the term 'Old Testament' will be used throughout this thesis. This is partly since the alternative term 'Hebrew Scriptures' obscures the fact that Mark is drawing on Greek biblical texts (see chapter 1 of this thesis for a defence of this claim). It also reflects the emphasis towards the end of Mark, explored in chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis, that Jesus' suffering and death inaugurates a redemption that eclipses that of the exodus - marking a wholesale shift from the 'old' to the 'new'.

[4] Willem S. Vorster, "The Production of the Gospel of Mark: Essay on Intertextuality" in *Speaking of Jesus*, ed. Willem S. Vorster and J. Eugene Botha (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 471-2.

[5] Howard Clark Kee, "The Function of Scriptural Quotations and Allusions in Mark 11-16" in *Jesus und Paulus,* ed. W.G. Kümmel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 181.

In 1939, German scholar Leonhard Goppelt took an important initial step towards highlighting the prevalence of the Old Testament in Mark. In his work on typology, Goppelt contends that ‘the acts of Christ and his Church occur throughout with almost constant reference to Scripture, which for [the editors] was not at all a collection of passages, but a living word ever-present in their memories and hearts’.[6] This scriptural saturation is most noticeable in the gospels, he argues, and yet has often been overlooked because ‘the bulk of Scriptural usage occurs […] in the plethora of allusions that *barely touch* on the wording of the Old Testament’ (emphasis added).[7] Goppelt’s stress on such implicit references anticipates Hays’ later work on metalepsis, namely the primacy of the unspoken or suppressed in intertextual links.[8] This emphasis has been rightly criticised for opening the floodgates to overly imaginative exegesis.[9] Goppelt’s methodology certainly runs this risk, with his elusive suggestion that allusions can be detected through ‘hints in the mode of presentation’.[10] For all its flaws, however, Goppelt’s work marks the start of an awareness

[6] Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: Die typologische Deutung des Alten Testaments im Neuen* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Verlag, 1939) 239: ‘Die Darstellung der Verfasser wie das Handeln Christi und seiner Gemeinde erfolgt weithin mit geradezu ständiger Bezugnahme auf die Schrift, welche für sie durchaus nicht eine Sammlung von Belegstellen, sondern lebendiges, im Gedächtnis und im Herzen gegenwärtiges Wort war.’

[7] Ibid.: ‘In den Evangelien ist die Masse der Schriftverwendung […] in der Fülle jener Hinweise, die den Wortlaut des AT kaum streifen.’

[8] Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1993), 29-32.

[9] For example: Paul Foster, “Echoes without Resonance: Critiquing Certain Aspects of Recent Scholarly Trends in the Study of the Jewish Scriptures in the New Testament,” in *JSNT* 38 (2015), 96-111. Foster argues that Hays’ emphasis on intertextuality is inherently flawed, since it relies on a method that ‘is not capable of self-falsification’ (96). The findings of the Haysian school, argues Foster, do not unearth the authorial intentions of the New Testament writers. They are rather ‘a radical form of modern reader-response’, a creative exercise where intertextual links are simply called into existence (111). Tuckett adds a further critique: ‘it is unlikely that much wider contexts were intended to be evoked afresh by authors to readers’ (74), basing his argument on low literacy rates and manuscript availability, coupled with the influx of Gentile readers with limited Old Testament knowledge. Interestingly, the exodus is one of the few exceptions noted by Tuckett, since its function ‘as a key part of Israel’s history’ grants it a much broader function within New Testament narratives (Christopher Tuckett, “Paul, Scripture and Ethics” in *New Testament Writers and the Old Testament*, ed. J. M. Court (London: SPCK, 2002).)

[10] Goppelt, *Typos*, 240: ‘Anspielungen in der Darstellungsweise.’

that the *subtle* use of the Old Testament in Mark does not equate to an *absence* of these Scriptures.

Around twenty years later, two German studies cemented a scholarly awareness of the Old Testament's prevalent role in Mark. In 1965, Alfred Suhl published the first monograph on Mark's use of the Old Testament. Following in the footsteps of Willi Marxsen, Suhl argues that Mark's preoccupation with an imminent parousia meant that he had no interest in *Heilsgeschichte*.[11] As a result, the Old Testament is not used to signal prophetic fulfilment but to provide a generic sense that the life of Jesus was 'schriftgemäß', much like Paul's summary of the Christian kerygma in 1 Corinthians 15:3.[12] To quote Suhl's inimitable German, the Old Testament therefore forms an 'unverbundenes Nebeneinander'[13] with the main gospel narrative. Despite this muted conclusion, however, Suhl's enumeration of the numerous Old Testament citations and allusions formed a springboard for further work in this field. Interest in Mark's use of the Old Testament was also generated by Siegfried Schulz's influential article 'Markus und das Alte Testament'. Approaching the text through the lens of form criticism, Schulz argues that Mark represents the earliest attempt to fuse emerging Hellenistic Christianity (which he believed was summarised in Philippians 2:8) with the Palestinian Jesus tradition: 'Mark's particular theological achievement lies in the fact that he interpreted this υπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου [Phil 2:8] as obedience to the original will of God made manifest in the Old Testament.'[14] Scripture is therefore subservient to the Hellenistic

[11] Alfred Suhl, *Die Funktion der alttestamentlichen Zitate und Anspielungen im Markusevangelium* (Gütersloher: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1965), 25.

[12] Suhl, *Die Funktion der alttestamentlichen Zitate*, 137.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Siegfried Schulz, "Markus und das Alte Testament," *ZTK* 58 (1961), 196: 'Die besondere theologische Leistung des Markus beruht nun aber darin, daß er dieses υπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου als Gehorsam gegenüber dem im Alten Testament manifest gewordenen, ursprünglichen Gotteswillen interpretiert hat.'

kerygma, woven into the narrative either to confirm[15] or to add theological depth[16] to Mark's presentation of Jesus. Both Suhl and Schulz have since been criticised, notably by H.C. Kee, for a view of the Old Testament in Mark that fails to engage adequately with the fulfilment language in passages such as Mark 14:49 ('Let the Scriptures be fulfilled').[17] Despite this, both publications mark a major step forward in drawing attention to the plethora of Old Testament citations and allusions in Mark.

As it became increasingly accepted that Mark draws widely on the Old Testament, scholarship began to explore *which Scriptures* are particularly significant in the gospel. Several scholars, writing from different perspectives, began to note the major role of the exodus motif in the gospel. One of the earliest to do so was Otto Piper, whose 1957 article 'Unchanging Promises: Exodus in the New Testament' surveys the 220 quotations from the book of Exodus in the New Testament. When the countless further allusions to the exodus journey are included, argues Piper, the exodus becomes the single most influential Old Testament motif. In a section of the article devoted to Mark's gospel, Piper concludes that 'the framework within which [Mark's] material was arranged was based upon a typological use of Exodus'.[18] Despite its brevity, this article laid the foundation for further work on the exodus in Mark. Support for Piper's thesis came in the early 1960s from Ulrich Mauser in his monograph *Christ in the Wilderness*. Strikingly, Mauser reaches a similar conclusion despite

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[15] Ibid., 197: 'allein vom Kyrios-Kerygma und uberhaupt der kerygmatischen Tradition des Heidenchristentums bekommt [Markus] die palastinischen Jesustraditionen und damit das Alte Testament in den Blickpunkt.'
[16] Ibid., 188: 'die Stellungnahme des Markus zum Alten Testament [ist] von der kerygmatischen Tradition des Heidenchristentums maßgeblich bestimmt.'
[17] Kee, "Scriptural Quotations and Allusions in Mark". Arguing from the fulfilment language in several of Mark's OT citations, Kee concludes that the Old Testament is 'an indispensable presupposition of all that Mark wrote, and a necessary link with the biblical tradition that Mark sees redefined and comprehended through Jesus' (179). Old Testament allusions or citations, he argues, occur 'at the most crucial points' in the narrative (173), to the extent that 'the closest Mark comes to a rationale for [his] apocalyptic dogma of suffering is to demonstrate that through it the scriptures are being fulfilled' (175).
[18] Otto Piper, "Unchanging Promises: Exodus in the New Testament," *Interpretation* 11 (1957), 19.

sharing neither Piper's presuppositions nor his methodology. Approaching the text through the lens of redaction criticism, Mauser announces his intention to unearth 'the creative intentions of the Evangelist'.[19] He posits that the wilderness location in Mark is the clearest divergence of redaction from tradition, granting the reader a window into Mark's theology. This evocative location, he argues, is not just an illustrative detail but a direct link to the exodus story. Within the gospel of Mark, Mauser observes that each reference to the wilderness is framed within the same threefold scheme: it opens with a public victory over Satan (either through teaching or in miracles), moves to Jesus' withdrawal from the scene of activity, and ends with the crowds flocking to join Jesus in the wilderness.[20] The wilderness therefore constitutes a place of 'eschatological struggle',[21] where the victory foreshadowed in the first exodus becomes 'reality in the epiphany of the Son of God.'[22] There are flaws in the argument, for instance the unconvincing attempt to include all the mountain and sea passages within a single wilderness rubric, yet Mauser helpfully complements Piper's argument from Old Testament citations that the exodus motif forms a central theme in the gospel. The rise of narrative criticism in North America did nothing to lessen an interest in this motif. In 1994, Willard Swartley published his monograph *Israel's Scripture Traditions and the Synoptic Gospels,* an extension of his doctoral work at Princeton on the exodus motif in the structure of Mark's gospel. Frustrated at what he perceived as subjectivity within redaction critical studies on Mark, Swartley takes a narrative critical approach to the gospel, moving from a study of isolated pericopes to the landscape of the entire gospel. His resulting thesis is that Mark is structured by the framework of the first exodus. This can be seen in two ways.

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[19] Ulrich Mauser, *Christ in the Wilderness: The Wilderness Theme in the Second Gospel and its Basis in the Biblical Tradition* (London: SCM, 1963), 13.
[20] Mauser, *Christ in the Wilderness*, 105.
[21] Ibid., 143.
[22] Ibid., 137.

Topologically, he refines the work of Mauser to argue that the 'sequence of sea, mountain, and wilderness […] functions as narrative frames'.[23] Jesus' Galilean ministry, he maintains, has the same movement as the first exodus as it moves from the sea to the mountain and into the wilderness. The work's primary insight, however, is that Mark's use of 'the way', a term occurring seven times between Mark 8:27 and 10:52, anchors the gospel in the exodus journey and becomes 'a hermeneutical tool whereby Mark contemporizes Jesus' past history so that Mark's readers hear the call to follow on this way.'[24] Twenty-first-century scholarship has continued to emphasise the prominence of the exodus motif in the gospel, as seen in Adela Yarbro Collins' recent commentary on Mark. This gospel, she contends, is 'an eschatological counterpart of an older biblical genre, the foundational sacred history. The biblical story describes God's activity through Moses to establish a people and to instruct them in the proper way of life. Mark's story describes God's activity through Jesus to reform the people and to bring in the new age. […] *The author of Mark has taken the model of biblical sacred history and transformed it*' (emphasis added).[25] Yarbro Collins is one of the first to highlight the coexistence of the exodus motif in Mark with 'Hellenistic historiographical and biographical traditions'.[26] This fusing of Jewish and Hellenistic traits is 'accomplished by the focus on the person of Jesus and by the presentation of his life and teaching in a way that assimilated him to the Hellenistic philosophers'.[27] This insight

[23] Willard M. Swartley, *Israel's Scripture Traditions and the Synoptic Gospels: Story Shaping Story* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 49.
[24] Swartley, *Israel's Scripture Traditions*, 111.
[25] Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 1.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.

overcomes the false dichotomy that has often hampered Markan studies, namely the assumption that the gospel is *either* Jewish *or* Greek.[28]

A number of other scholars highlight the exodus motif in Mark, but argue that the gospel is primarily drawing not on the Mosaic exodus but on *Isaiah's prophesied new exodus*. This view has become increasingly common in recent work on the gospel. The foundation for this shift in emphasis was laid in the late twentieth century by Beavis[29] and Schneck,[30] both of whom argued for Isaiah as the primary influence on Mark. Recent prominence was given to this argument by Watts[31] and Marcus.[32] Published in 2000, Watts' monograph *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* contends that the exodus prophecies in Isaiah 40-55 provide the 'basic thematic contour' for Mark's gospel. The Isaianic new exodus (INE) consists in three stages, argues Watts: '(A) Yahweh's deliverance and healing of his exiled people, (B) a journey where "blind" Israel is led along "a way they do not know", and (C) arrival in Jerusalem.'[33] The same threefold structure, he writes, can be seen in Mark with: '(A) Jesus' "evangelistic" ministry of powerful words and deeds in Galilee and beyond, B) a journey with his "blind" disciples, and C) arrival in Jerusalem.'[34] The study is particularly convincing in the central section, where Mark's repeated references to 'the way' and structural use of the blind healings show marked similarities to Isaiah's prophesied eschatological exodus.[35] Watts'

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[28] This can be seen, for example, in her notes on the transfiguration in Mark 9, where she argues that Mark 'appears to have drawn upon the Hellenistic and Roman genres of epiphany and metamorphosis, but in a way that adapts them to the biblical tradition, especially to that of the theophany on Sinai' (419).

[29] Mary Ann Beavis, *Mark's Audience: The Literary and Social Setting of Mark 4.11-12* (London: T&T Clark, 1989).

[30] Richard Schneck, *Isaiah in the Gospel of Mark* (Vallejo: BIBAL Press, 1994).

[31] Rikki Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000).

[32] Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993). Insights from this work have since been incorporated into Marcus' two-volume commentary on Mark, published in 2009 by Yale University Press.

[33] Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus*, 371.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Both Watts and Marcus arrived independently at this same conclusion. Watts came to it during his doctoral studies at Cambridge and Marcus during his work on *The Way of the Lord*. In the introduction to his 2000 monograph, Watts reflects on this 'gratifying' independent support for his work (p. v).

attempts to fit the entire gospel into the Isaianic framework result, however, in some exegetical acrobatics, for example the extended section trying to link Jesus' exorcisms with the promised destruction of idols that will accompany YHWH's deliverance of his people.[36] Marcus independently arrives at a similar conclusion to Watts in his 1993 monograph *The Way of the Lord*. He contends here that Isaiah's motif of the kingdom of God, couched in exodus language, is of 'central importance' to Mark, shaping both Markan christology and the narrative structure.[37] There is considerable overlap with Watts, especially in the section Mark 8:27-10:52, which both Marcus and Watts see as a deliberate fulfilment of Isaiah's new exodus eschatology.[38] The combined influence of these scholars has led to a recent shift in Markan studies away from the historic exodus and towards Isaiah's prophesied 'new exodus'.[39]

Contribution of This Thesis

It is gratifying to see consistent and widespread support for the prominence of the exodus motif in Mark. A diverse group of twentieth- and twenty-first-century scholars, from redaction to narrative critics, recognise its prominence in Mark. It has been detected in the

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[36] Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus*, 157.
[37] Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 202.
[38] Marcus differs from Watts in his understanding of 'the Way of the Lord' not as a subjective but an objective genitive. He therefore argues that the gospel's central 'way' motif 'is not […] about the human way to the Basilea but rather about God's way, which is his Basilea, his own extension of kingly power' (Marcus, *Way of the Lord*, 33). In his commentary on Mark, Marcus takes the interesting step of applying his work on the exodus motif to Mark's *Sitz im Leben*. Marcus breaks from the traditional view that Mark was written to Gentile believers in Rome, arguing instead on the basis of the prominent Old Testament language that 'the theory of a Syrian provenance seems to be the strongest one available' (Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 36).
[39] This is a trend that Smith also observes, noting that recent studies of the exodus motif in Mark are increasingly 'mediated through Isaiah': Daniel Smith, "The Uses of 'New Exodus' in New Testament Scholarship: Preparing a Way through the Wilderness," *Currents in Biblical Research* 14 (2016), 207–243. One illustration of this shift towards Isaiah's 'new exodus' is Hays' 2016 monograph on the use of Hebrew Scripture in the gospels, where he concludes that 'Isaiah's poetic image of the return from exile as a "new exodus" becomes a *central organising image* for Mark's gospel' (emphasis added): Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016), 23.

gospel's topology,[40] structure,[41] explicit citations,[42] and semantics.[43] Given this comprehensive background, however, what can this present study contribute to the field? The first contribution is to re-emphasise the prominence of the historic exodus as opposed to the Isaianic new exodus. There can be no doubt that Isaiah is significant in Mark. The gospel's only explicit editorial citation is attributed to Isaiah (Mk 1:2), and the frequent use of Isaianic language and themes throughout the gospel indicates the influence of Isaiah on Mark. Focus on the Isaianic new exodus has, however, obscured some of the gospel's clearest allusions to the historic exodus. To take just one example, the numerous links between the transfiguration and Sinai have often been overlooked in recent studies that focus instead on the connection between Mark's central chapters and Isaiah's new exodus 'way'.

The second, more significant, contribution of this study is to explore the relationship between the exodus motif and the Passion. Given that the exodus motif is one of triumphant liberation, how does it relate to the primary Markan emphasis that the Son of man *must suffer*? To claim, as several of the above scholars have done, that the (new) exodus is of central importance to Mark's narrative, requires an explanation of how this exultant Old Testament motif is compatible with a cruciform gospel. Such an explanation is often lacking, however. Swartley suggests that 'the way' in Mark 8:27-10:52 is 'an antitype to the OT journey to the promised land',[44] yet does not develop this idea further. Watts goes further by linking Mark's 'ransom' and cup sayings to the suffering servant motif in Isaiah's fourth

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[40] Mauser, *Christ in the Wilderness,* 142.
[41] Swartley, *Israel's Scripture Traditions*, 111.
[42] Yarbro Collins, *Mark,* 135ff.
[43] Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus*, 371. Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 202.
[44] Willard Swartley, "Structure of the Gospel of Mark," Ph.D. diss.: Princeton Theological Seminary (1973), 228.

Servant Song,[45] but does not explore in depth how this relates to Mark's climactic cross and resurrection narrative.[46] Perhaps the most extreme example is Duncan Derrett's monograph *The Making of Mark: The Scriptural Bases of the Earliest Gospel*. Derrett argues that Mark's gospel 'tells the story of Jesus as parallel to, and step by step analogous with, the story of Moses and Joshua'.[47] A self-described 'work of detection, done by an academic detective',[48] this study unfortunately lacks any exegetical control and was therefore not included in the above literature survey. It is striking, however, that although Derrett is otherwise quick to find the exodus motif in Mark where other scholars exercise greater caution, he suddenly abandons this model at the end of Mark 12, declaring that the final chapters are modelled not on the exodus but on Lamentations.[49] This thesis aims to break new ground by exploring the exodus motif in the final chapters of Mark. On the basis of the Passover framework in Mark 14:1-15:47 and the tearing of the temple veil in Mark 15:38 it will be argued that, far from disappearing at the gospel's climax, the exodus motif forms the primary theological foil for the salvation accomplished by Jesus at his death.

Third, this study aims to contribute a greater awareness of the fluidity with which Mark employs the exodus motif. In his discussion of the different ways in which maximalists

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[45] Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus*, 115 n135: 'It is significant that the final summons to participate in the NE [New Exodus] (Isa 52:1-12) and the concluding and most expansive song of restoration of Zion/Jerusalem in 40-55 (54:17), perhaps seen as promise and fulfilment, are separated by the so-called fourth 'Servant Song', 52:13-53:12. Given that the final form of this material is the result of conscious editorial activity, and not merely haphazard compilation, the question must be asked as to why these materials are juxtaposed in this way? I suggest that they were perceived as being related, with the fourth song describing the way in which Yahweh's agent, the unknown servant, will realise the NE.'

[46] This omission has been noted even in sympathetic reviews of Watts' work. Christopher Young closes his otherwise positive review of Watts with a critique of his overly 'brief […] treatment of Jesus' trial, death, and resurrection' (Christopher Young, *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 13.2). Sharyn Dowd similarly praises Watts for arguing 'carefully' and 'persuasively' throughout, yet notes that his attempt to incorporate Mark's 'ransom saying' and wider suffering motif into the rubric of the Isaianic New Exodus is 'not completely successful' (Sharyn Dowd, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119.1).

[47] J. Duncan Derrett, *The Making of Mark: The Scriptural Bases of the Earliest Gospel* (Shipston-on-Stour: Drinkwater, 1985), 24.

[48] Derrett, *The Making of Mark*, 1.

[49] Ibid., 28.

and minimalists approach Mark's use of the Old Testament, Steve Moyise makes the following remark: maximalists, he argues, invariably search for 'identity of meaning'. They should instead acquire 'a more sophisticated biblical theology that can encompass discontinuity as well as continuity'.[50] This critique aptly applies to the studies surveyed above. Almost without exception,[51] there is an assumption that the exodus - if present in Mark - will appear in its familiar form, its contours and emphases unaltered by the new narrative context. This thesis aims to question that assumption, arguing instead that it is precisely Mark's multifaceted use of Israel's founding moment that makes his gospel so compelling.

Old Testament Allusions For a Gentile Audience?

Although there continues to be debate about the precise nature of Mark's original audience, there is widespread agreement that it was written with Gentiles in mind. The explanation of Jewish ceremonial washing in Mark 7:3-4, coupled with the several translations of Aramaic phrases into Greek (Mk 5:41; 7:34; 15:34), suggests that early hearers were unfamiliar with Jewish customs and language. Given this background, is it reasonable to suggest that an Old Testament motif should play such a prominent role in Mark? To frame the question another way, how likely are Gentile hearers, who are not even aware of common Jewish rituals, to benefit from allusions to the Old Testament? The answer comes in Jesus' statement in Mark 4:24:[52] 'pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will

[50] Steve Moyise, "The Wilderness Quotation in Mark 1:2-3," in *Wilderness: Essays in Honour of Frances Young,* ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 86.
[51] Yarbro Collins is the notable exception to this general rule. From the outset, she makes clear that Mark employs the exodus model fluidly: 'the author of Mark has taken the model of biblical sacred history and transformed it […] by infusing it with an eschatological and apocalyptic perspective' (1).
[52] Unless otherwise stated, scriptural quotations throughout this thesis are from the English Standard Version (ESV).

be measured to you, and still more will be added to you.' This is spoken just after the parable of the sower, which lays the foundation for Jesus' future teaching (Mk 4:13 'Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?'). In the parable of the sower, Jesus makes clear that there will be different responses from his hearers, ranging from unbelief and superficial understanding to fruitful obedience. These responses, Jesus goes on to explain, are the result of the hearer's initial attitude. Those who come with a full measure will be rewarded with the fullness of his teaching. Those who only feign interest will receive correspondingly little benefit. This applies to the wider gospel narrative. Mark is a gospel that 'measures back' in kind. A superficial hearer will learn of the power and Passion of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Those willing to dig deeper, however, will be rewarded with further layers of meaning, just one of which is the gospel's rich connection to the exodus story. The dynamic is similar to the effect of Paul's writings on his audience as analysed by Christopher Stanley. Stanley distinguishes between three hypothetical groups of hearers, ranging from the uninformed to the expert, all of whom benefit to varying extents from the depth of Paul's learning.[53] In the same way, Mark can be understood - and enjoyed - by a wide range of hearers, each plumbing the gospel to a different depth. Mark's predominantly Gentile audience is therefore not incompatible with a prevalent use of the Old Testament. The challenge for the hearer, then as now, is to approach the gospel with a 'full measure'.

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[53] Christopher Stanley, *Arguing with Scripture: The Rhetoric of Quotations in the Letters of Paul* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 62-74.

Chapter 1: The Opening Citation

> The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way. The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'" (Mk 1:1-3, own translation)

Opening words matter. They capture the hearer's attention and shape their expectations. They define the narrative world and build a sense of anticipation. The opening words of Mark's gospel do all of this - and more. This chapter will focus on the composite citation in Mark 1:2-3, asking three connected questions. First, which passages is Mark citing? This chapter will refute the traditional, and dominant, view that Malachi 3:1 is here paired with Isaiah 40:3, arguing instead in favour of Exodus 23:20 and Isaiah 40:3. Second, why are these passages cited? A raft of suggestions have been made by scholars, ranging from phonetics to the underlying influence of early Christian testimonies. This chapter will argue that these passages are contextually connected to each other, and to the surrounding prologue, by the exodus motif. Third, what is the role of this citation in the subsequent narrative? Does it simply serve as a commentary on the Baptist's ministry, or does it provide a broader lens through which to view the gospel? Several reasons will be given for the latter, namely that the exodus motif embedded in this citation is of considerable significance for the ensuing narrative.

Unravelling the Source Texts[54]

Which passages are quoted in this opening citation? Mark 1:3 is an easy starting point for this enquiry, containing an almost verbatim quotation of Isaiah 40:3 LXX. A study of this quotation unveils two key features, both of which are crucial for unravelling the more complex citation in verse 2:

Mark 1:3	Isaiah 40:3 LXX	Isaiah 40:3 MT
φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ἑτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ	φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ἑτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν	קוֹל קוֹרֵא בַּמִּדְבָּר פַּנּוּ דֶּרֶךְ יְהוָה יַשְּׁרוּ בָּעֲרָבָה מְסִלָּה לֵאלֹהֵינוּ׃

The first, and most obvious, feature of this quotation is that Mark *preserves the LXX reading,* which differs from the MT at two points.[55] The first divergence between MT and LXX is the occurrence of בָּעֲרָבָה in Isaiah 40:3 MT. This Hebrew parallelism between the two imperatival phrases בַּמִּדְבָּר פַּנּוּ and יַשְּׁרוּ בָּעֲרָבָה is not preserved in the LXX, which refers only once to the wilderness. Mark 1:3, following the LXX, similarly only has one reference

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[54] Unless otherwise stated, all quotations of the Greek text of Mark's gospel throughout this thesis are taken from: *Novum Testamentum Graece 28*, ed. Erwin Nestle, Barbara Nestle, Aland Kurt ed al. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012). Quotations of the LXX are taken from the eclectic text compiled in: *Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Academiae Scientiarum Gottingensis Editum,* ed. Joseph Ziegler, John William Wevers et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1908-2015). Quotations of the Masoretic Text are taken from the Leningrad Codex as presented in: Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, ed. Karl Eiliger and Wilhelm Rudolph (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1977). Key textual variants are highlighted and discussed within the course of this thesis.

[55] Some scholars add a third difference, arguing that the MT in verse 3a ties the location בַּמִּדְבָּר to the imperative פַּנּוּ, whereas the LXX shifts the emphasis back to use ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ as a description of the messenger. This is not certain, however, since the word order of the LXX does not require reading ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ as an antecedent modifier. For a discussion of this feature see: Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 143, and: Robert Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 36.

to the wilderness. The next chapter of this thesis will examine the prominent function of the wilderness location in Mark's prologue - making it all the more significant that Mark preserves the simpler LXX rendering in his citation. A second difference between the LXX and MT is the construct chain מְסִלָּה לֵאלֹהֵינוּ in Isaiah 40:3 MT. This is rendered with the plural τὰς τρίβους τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν in the LXX, a reading which Mark adopts. Chapter 4 of this thesis will argue that the concept of 'The Way' of the Lord (singular) is a pivotal concept in Mark's gospel. The MT reading of a singular 'Way', as opposed to the multiple 'Ways' in the LXX, would therefore once again be more in line with Mark's focus. Both of these examples make clear that Mark is quoting exclusively from the LXX, an observation confirmed by the primacy of the LXX in later quotations in the gospel.[56]

A second feature of the citation in Mark 1:3 is *Mark's willingness to adapt the LXX to fit his own context*. In verse 3c, Mark replaces the LXX reading τὰς τρίβους τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν with the simpler phrase τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ. There is considerable debate about the reason for this and its implications for Mark's christology,[57] but I agree with Gundry that its function is simply to 'keep Mark's audience from misunderstanding the "Lord" as God the Father rather than as Jesus'.[58] Aware that his readers would likely identify τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν with the Father, Mark streamlines Isaiah 40:3 LXX to distinguish with greater clarity between the three roles of the Father, the messenger, and the Lord that are crucial to his prologue. By substituting the

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[56] Following a comprehensive survey of all citations and allusions in the final chapters of Mark, Kee draws a number of conclusions about the patterns that emerge. One feature he observes is that Mark 'regularly reproduces the quotations or makes his allusions in the textual tradition associated with the LXX': Howard Kee, "The Function of Scriptural Quotations and Allusions in Mark 11-16," in *Jesus und Paulus,* ed. Werner G. Kümmel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 173.
[57] Broadhead, for example, argues that the replacement of τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν with the pronoun αὐτοῦ is indicative of 'a primitive understanding of the lordship of Jesus' throughout the gospel of Mark. Mark, he argues, consciously avoids 'the temptations of a Christology which diverges into ontological speculation and impinges upon the identity of Yahweh'. This argument fails to take into account the narrative context of the opening citation, however, where the prophesied ability of Jesus to baptise in the Spirit, his affirmation by the Father and his victory over Satan all communicate a high Christology: Edwin Broadhead, *Naming Jesus: Titular Christology in the Gospel of Mark* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 143-44.
[58] Gundry, *Apology for the Cross*, 36.

pronoun αὐτοῦ for τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν, Mark is therefore condensing two divine titles into a single, more recognisable christological title. Taken in tandem with the first feature of the quotation, this demonstrates that Mark is reliant on, and yet not bound by, the wording of the LXX.

Applying this observation to the more complex citation in Mark 1:2 creates a strong textual argument that this verse is drawing primarily on Exodus 23:20. This stands in opposition to the traditional view that Malachi 3:1 is the main source text. Before examining this argument in detail, however, it is important at the outset to avoid a false dichotomy between these two passages. The discussion below is not concerned with *excluding* Malachi 3:1, but with asserting the *primacy* of Exodus 23:20. Several factors indicate that, by the time Mark wrote his gospel, Exodus 23:20 and Malachi 3:1 had become inseparably entwined. To pit one against the other would, therefore, be an anachronistic pursuit. Glazier-McDonald highlights the similarities between Exodus 23:20 and Malachi 3:1 in the MT, concluding that not only is the semantic overlap 'too striking to be accidental', but that the content of 'the passage in Malachi appears to be a reworking of the ἄγγελος text in the Book of the Covenant'.[59] Marcus argues that this textual link in the MT is further strengthened by the pairing of both passages in Devarim Rabbah, a midrash on the book of Deuteronomy.[60] As Neusner has pointed out, the derivation of pre-70 AD oral tradition from late rabbinic texts is a questionable pursuit, built on the 'assumption that the conditions for the formation and transmission of traditions were constant from remote antiquity.'[61] At the very least, however,

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[59] Beth Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi: The Divine Messenger* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 130.
[60] Marcus, *Mark 1-8,* 142. Devarim Rabbah 11:9 states: 'The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses, "Even this is a good measure that I have said to you, 'Behold,' as it is said: 'Behold, I send an angel' (Exodus 23:20), 'Behold, the righteous shall be rewarded on earth' (Proverbs 11:31), 'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet' (Malachi 3:23)."' (H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, *Midrash Rabbah: Translated into English with Notes, Glossary and Indices* (London: Soncino Press, 1939).)
[61] Jacob Neusner, "The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees before A.D. 70: The Problem of Oral Transmission," *JJS* 22 (1971), 6.

Devarim Rabbah demonstrates an independent awareness of the (con)textual similarities between the two passages. That being said, in Mark's use of this quotation Exodus 23:20 seems to be the primary emphasis:

Mark 1:2	Exodus 23:20 LXX	Exodus 23:20 MT
ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου ὃς κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδόν σου·	ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου ἵνα φυλάξῃ σε ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ ὅπως εἰσαγάγῃ σε εἰς τὴν γῆν ἣν ἡτοίμασά σοι·	קֹ֚ול קֹורֵ֔א בַּמִּדְבָּ֕ר פַּנּ֖וּ דֶּ֣רֶךְ יְהוָ֑ה יַשְּׁרוּ֙ בָּעֲרָבָ֔ה מְסִלָּ֖ה לֵאלֹהֵֽינוּ׃
Mark 1:2	Malachi 3:1 LXX	Malachi 3:1 MT
ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου, ὃς κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδόν σου·	ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἐξαποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου καὶ ἐπιβλέψεται ὁδὸν πρὸ προσώπου μου καὶ ἐξαίφνης ἥξει εἰς τὸν ναὸν ἑαυτοῦ κύριος ὃν ὑμεῖς ζητεῖτε καὶ ὁ ἄγγελος τῆς διαθήκης ὃν ὑμεῖς θέλετε ἰδοὺ ἔρχεται λέγει κύριος παντοκράτωρ·	הִנְנִ֤י שֹׁלֵחַ֙ מַלְאָכִ֔י וּפִנָּה־דֶ֖רֶךְ לְפָנָ֑י וּפִתְאֹם֩ יָב֨וֹא אֶל־הֵיכָל֜וֹ הָאָד֣וֹן ׀ אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּ֣ם מְבַקְשִׁ֗ים וּמַלְאַ֨ךְ הַבְּרִ֜ית אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּ֤ם חֲפֵצִים֙ הִנֵּה־בָ֔א אָמַ֖ר יְהוָ֥ה צְבָאֽוֹת׃

When analysing this citation, it is important to remember the first lesson gleaned from the citation in Mark 1:3, namely that *Mark is quoting from the LXX*. It is immediately apparent that the first 9 words of verse 2 are identical to the beginning of Exodus 23:20 LXX.[62] The first lines of Malachi 3:1 LXX, by contrast, share only generic similarities with Mark 1:2. Although they contain the terms (ἐξ)αποστέλλω and τὸν ἄγγελόν, the first-person pronoun and later placement of πρὸ προσώπου μου differ noticeably from Mark's citation. The second half of Mark 1:2 is less straightforward, occurring in neither Exodus 23:20 LXX nor Malachi 3:1 LXX. Many commentators jump to Malachi 3:1 MT, picking up on the phrase וּפִנָּה־דֶ֖רֶךְ

[62] NA[28] opts to omit the ἐγὼ in the first line, most likely influenced by the editors principle of preferring the more difficult reading (in this case the reading that varies from the LXX source text). I believe that this is a mistake, however. The inclusion of ἐγὼ has earlier attestation in א and the writings of Origen and Eusebius, and widespread geographical support in the Syriac sy[h], Coptic bo[ms] and sa[ms], and Latin vg[cl].

לְפָנָי as the closest parallel to ὃς κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδόν σου. There are two problems with this, however. The first is the general principle, demonstrated twice times in Mark 1:3, that Mark is not creating his own blend of MT and LXX material. If, as some argue,[63] Mark is improving the LXX translation ἐπιβλέψεται (drawn from the Qal of פנה) with his own translation of the Piel in the MT text, why did he not similarly correct the omission of בָּעֲרָבָה or plural rendering of מְסִלָּה לֵאלֹהֵינוּ when citing Isaiah 40:3 LXX? In addition to this, both Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1 MT use the Piel form of פנה in conjunction with דרך. If Mark were deliberately drawing on this linking phrase in the MT, why would he render them differently in his Greek text, with κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδόν in verse 2 and ἑτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν in verse 3?

It is here that the second feature observed in Mark 1:3 comes into play: *Mark's willingness to adapt the LXX to fit his own context*. There are three verbs introduced in the second half of Exodus 23:20 LXX: φυλάσσειν, εἰσάγειν, and ἑτοιμάζειν. The messenger will *guard* the people on their way and *bring* them into the land *prepared* for them by YHWH. Is it possible that Mark is eliding these three concepts into the single verb κατασκευάσει? Just as Mark streamlined the two divine titles κυρίου and τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν into a single christological term in verse 3 to fit seamlessly into his narrative, so he may well be condensing three terms from Exodus 23:20 LXX into the single overarching concept κατασκευάσει, streamlined to mirror the preparatory role of the Baptist in the following verses.

Many of those who view Malachi as the dominant citation in this verse do so not on *textual* but on *contextual* grounds, however. Several commentators, both early and modern,

[63] See, for example: R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002), 64.

argue that Mark's prologue has greater affinity with the immediate context of Malachi 3:1 than with that of Exodus 23:20. Origen, for example, attributes the quotation solely to Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1, arguing that the Baptist is portrayed by Mark as the Elijah *redivivus* prophesied in Malachi 4:5,[64] 'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.' A similar understanding of the Baptist in Mark 1 as the eschatological Elijah is likely reflected in the early variant readings in the Codex Bezae. δέρριν is inserted here in verse 6 to describe the Baptist as ἐνδεδυμένος **δέρριν** τρίχας καμήλου καὶ ζώνην δερματίνην, likely indicating a scribal attempt to link John more explicitly to the pseudo-Elijah figures in Zechariah 13:4 LXX who tried to authenticate their prophetic status by dressing like Elijah in δέρριν τριχίνην.[65] In a modern formulation of a similar perspective, Yarbro Collins argues that 'although the similarities in wording between Mark 1:2 and Exod 23:20 are greater', this is likely an allusion to Malachi 3:1 'since the context in Malachi is similar to the context in Mark'. Just as Malachi's messenger 'is identified with Elijah, [… so also] in Mark, John is portrayed as Elijah returned'.[66] Marcus similarly links Mark 1:2b to Malachi 3:1 on the basis of the Elijah figure featuring in the immediate contexts of both passages.[67]

How strong is the link between the Baptist and Elijah in Mark's prologue, however? The key evidence usually cited is Mark 1:6, the description of the Baptist as ἐνδεδυμένος τρίχας καμήλου καὶ ζώνην δερματίνην περὶ τὴν ὀσφὺν αὐτοῦ. Links are drawn to 2 Kings 1:8 LXX, where Elijah is depicted as ἀνὴρ δασὺς καὶ ζώνην δερματίνην περιεζωσμένος τὴν ὀσφὺν αὐτοῦ. It is more than a stretch to link the phrase ἀνὴρ δασὺς, derived from the ambiguous אִישׁ בַּעַל שֵׂעָר in 2 Kings 1:8 MT, to Mark's τρίχας καμήλου, however. There is,

[64] Origen, *Commentary on John* (Writing on John 6:7, 14).
[65] A similar reading also appears in Codex Vercellensis: 'erat autem Johannes <u>indutus</u> <u>pellem</u> camelli.'
[66] Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 136.
[67] Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 142.

admittedly, considerable semantic overlap in the description of the leather belt, but it hardly seems accurate to label such a common article of clothing, as Lane does, a 'characteristic feature' of Elijah.[68] This supposed connection between the clothing of Elijah and the Baptist also does not account for the Baptist's diet of 'locusts and wild honey' (Mk 1:6). This colourful detail finds no parallel in Elijah's life, yet makes up half of the description of the Baptist. What is the significance of this unusual diet? The clearest answer comes in the Baptist's wilderness setting. The prologue, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter, is replete with wilderness references. This wilderness setting provides a link between the four items in the description of the Baptist: camel's hair, a leather belt, locusts and wild honey. This is the attire and diet of the desert, of a life lived outside civilised territory, where even the honey is 'wild'. To quote Edwards, 'John's rustic dress and diet set him apart from the refined temple cult in Jerusalem and further identify him with "the desert region".'[69]

The most plausible link between the Baptist and Malachi's Elijah *redivivus* appears, however, not in the prologue but in Mark 9. In this passage, as Jesus and his three closest disciples descend the Mount of Transfiguration, they discuss the eschatological role of Elijah. When the disciples' ask about the scribal teaching that Elijah must first 'restore all things' before the end comes, Jesus tells them that 'Elijah has come' (Mk 9:11-13). This can hardly be read in any other way than a direct reference to the Baptist. This intriguing passage will be studied in depth in chapter three of this thesis, which focuses on the transfiguration. It will be argued there that even this unmistakable connection between the Baptist and Elijah does not equate to a direct affirmation of Malachi's eschatological expectations. As will be demonstrated, the passage's immediate context, combined with Jesus' wider opposition to

[68] William Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 51.
[69] James Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 32.

scribal teaching, suggest that Jesus is emphasising the role of the Baptist as a suffering prophet, rather than his work of 'restoring the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers' anticipated in Malachi 4:5.

A second contextual argument for linking Mark 1:2 and Malachi 3:1 noted by Hays, amongst others, is the 'threat of God's approaching judgement'.[70] Malachi 3 and 4 warn that the coming day of the Lord will not be the the time of unmitigated blessing that Israel had naively anticipated. The Lord will come 'like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap' (Mal 3:2), and 'will draw near to [Israel] for judgment' (Mal 3:5). Here the 'juridicial function of the Day [of the Lord]' is stressed, in which 'the defendants are not so much *promised* the right to a speedy trial as *warned* that they will get one whether they like it or not.'[71] It is against this backdrop that the preparatory role of the second Elijah is imperative, since without the moral transformation of the people the Lord will 'come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction' (Mal 4:6). There is, however, no direct parallel for Malachi's warning of impending judgement in Mark's prologue. In the other synoptic gospels, the 'refiner's fire' of Malachi 3:2 emerges in the Baptist's warning of 'the wrath to come' (Mt 3:7, Lk 3:7). Here the crowds are told that 'every tree […] that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the *fire*' (Mt 3:10, Lk 3:9), and even Jesus' baptism will involve both 'the Holy Spirit and *fire*' (Mt 3:11, Lk 3:17), anticipating his future role in '*burning* the chaff with unquenchable *fire*' (Mt 3:12, Lk 3:17). None of these elements is present in Mark's description of the Baptist, however. There is a much more optimistic note to the Baptist's ministry in Mark 1:4-8. Although there is an emphasis on repentance, this is linked to an expectation of the 'forgiveness of sins' (Mk 1:4). Even Yarbro Collins, despite her leaning towards a Malachi

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[70] Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016), 21.
[71] Thomas McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 1357.

link, notes that this repentance 'signifies primarily a *positive* response to the initiative of God taken through the agency of John' (emphasis added).[72] Similarly, the description of Jesus as one 'who is mightier than I' (Mk 1:7) is not ominous but promissory, for Jesus comes to offer an even greater baptism 'with the Holy Spirit' (Mk 1:8). *Pace* Watts, Mark's prologue therefore does not seem to emphasise 'the threat inherent in Yahweh's […] coming'[73] or draw on Malachi's 'ominous note of warning […] that the nation must be prepared or else face purging judgement.'[74] As this chapter will go on to argue, the contextual links between Mark's prologue and Exodus 23:20 - just like the textual links - are considerably stronger than those with Malachi 3:1.

The Purpose of the Composite Citation

The composite citation has a dual function in the prologue: it *introduces the key characters* of the narrative and it *embeds this narrative in an exodus context*. The first of these is immediately obvious. Mark's adaptation of the Old Testament passages delineates three figures: the first-person speaker (ἐγὼ), the second-person object (σου), and the third-person messenger (τὸν ἄγγελόν). As has been seen above, Mark's streamlining of the quotation makes it simple to match these figures to the characters in the prologue. The Father's promise in verse 2, delivered from 'off stage', is matched by the voice resounding from heaven at Jesus' baptism, declaring him to be the beloved Son. The object of these promises, the κυρίος,[75] points forward to the advent of Jesus, the 'mightier one' heralded in verse 7. The messenger, whose entire role in verses 2 and 3 revolves around preparing the

[72] Yarbro Collins, *Mark,* 141-42.
[73] Rikki Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 5.
[74] Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus*, 370.
[75] There is virtual unanimity that κυρίος in Mark 1:2-3 is a reference to Jesus, not the Father. For an argument that it refers to the Father see: Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 147.

way of the Lord, is clearly the Baptist, whose ministry of baptism and preaching paves the way for Jesus' entrance. This sheds some light on why Mark collates Exodus 23:20 with Isaiah 40:1, although the ascription of the quotation to Isaiah in verse 2 and the sole use of the Isaiah passage in the synoptic parallels (Mt 3:1-3; Lk 3:3-6) would suggest that only Isaiah was traditionally connected to the Baptist's appearance. The inclusion of Exodus 23:20 allows Mark to introduce the role of the Father into the narrative. The 'voice crying in the wilderness' was not of human initiative but divine appointment. To quote Kingsbury, the composite nature of the citation reveals that the Father is 'the sole initiator and guide of the action that will take place in the ministries of John and of Jesus'. His will is 'determinative of the norms governing his story'.[76] Even more than this, France notes that the inclusion of Exodus 23:20 grants 'the reader a heavenly perspective which is denied to the actors of the story'.[77] The 'I' and the 'you' cited in Mark 1:2 reflect the dialogue between the Father and the pre-existent Son. This is a gospel, in other words, which stretches back far earlier than the ministry of the Baptist. This window into a heavenly dialogue, provided by Exodus 23:20, stresses the primacy of the Son and explains the preeminence of Jesus despite the temporal priority of the Baptist. The composite citation therefore fulfils a parallel function to John 1:15: 'John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'" The promise of the Father to the pre-existent Son in Mark 1:2 is a reminder that Jesus, despite beginning his ministry *after* the Baptist, is still the mightier one who was with God long *before* these events transpired.

Is the citation more than an extended *dramatis personae*, however? If its role were simply to introduce the Father, the Son, and the Baptist, why would Mark have done so

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[76] Jack Dean Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1983) 57.
[77] France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 59.

through the lens of multiple Old Testament texts? The verses of John's gospel quoted above, for example, achieve the introduction of these figures without explicit recourse to the Old Testament. Why does Mark feel the need to couch the introduction of his central characters in Old Testament language? One common explanation is that the composite citation does not represent a deliberate editorial decision. Mark, according to this view, is simply inheriting a traditional collection of texts. Rendel Harris argues that the reference to 'the prophet Isaiah' in Mark 1:2 reflects a standard 'introduction to composite citations which […] has been recognised as traceable to the *Testimony Book*' (original emphasis).[78] The attribution of this citation solely to Isaiah is, admittedly, striking. Several manuscripts with the variant reading 'τοῖς προφήταις' in place of 'τῷ Ἠσαΐᾳ τῷ προφήτῃ' indicate that readers from as early as the second century[79] noticed the incongruence of introducing a composite quotation with a singular attribution. This citation formula by itself, however, does not necessarily point to the influence of a Testimony Book. Other equally plausible suggestions have been offered for this reference to Isaiah: Gundry argues from extant literature that naming only one author before a composite citation is a common Jewish practice;[80] Kee suggests that the *implicit* synthesis of Old Testament material is a distinctive Markan trait, seen most clearly in the cleansing of the temple (Mk 11:17) and the parable of the tenants (Mk 12:1-12);[81] and Watts suggests that the prominence of Isaiah at the beginning and end of the quotation may be a Markan intercalation, providing an Isaian 'framework into which the Exodus/Malachi conflation is inserted'.[82]

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[78] James Rendel Harris, *Testimonies,* 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920), 2:64.

[79] For example *Against Heresies* 3.10.5, where Irenaeus quotes Mark 1:1-2 as 'Initium Evangelii Jesu Christi Filii Dei, quemadmodum scriptum est in Prophetis'. One chapter later, Irenaeus cites Mark 1:2 as 'quemadmodum scriptum est in Esaia propheta' (*Against Heresies* 3:11:8), showing his awareness of both traditions.

[80] Robert Horton Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel: With Special Reference to the Messianic Hope* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 125.

[81] Kee, "The Function of Scriptural Quotations," 177-81.

[82] Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus,* 89.

Marcus argues from a different angle that Mark is relying on an early Christian testimony, stating that the occurrence of פנה דרך in both Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3 had caused the texts to be 'already connected in an early Semitic milieu'.[83] There are two main problems with this argument, however. It fails to take the presence of Exodus 23:20 into account and passes over the fact that these texts have not been found together in any extant literature. As was briefly mentioned earlier, Malachi 3:1 and Exodus 23:20 were very likely already connected by the time of Mark's writing. Neither of these texts have been found elsewhere in connection with Isaiah 40:3, however. Even more significantly, the other synoptic gospels both cite Exodus 23:20/Malachi 3:1 separately from Isaiah 40:3, seemingly unaware of any 'traditional' link between the passages. Marcus works around this by arguing that 'the linked texts were eventually translated into Greek, drawing on both LXX and non-LXX textual traditions, and in one form of the tradition (Q) Exod 23:20/Mal 3:1 became detached from Isa 40:3.'[84] This argument scarcely passes the test of Occam's razor, however. Given that this precise compilation occurs in no other extant literature and that the analysis of the text provided below will show how closely it aligns with the surrounding narrative, it seems unlikely that this composite citation is simply inserted as a traditional Christian 'prooftext' for the Baptist's ministry.

Why, then, is this combination of passages inserted here? To frame the question another way, what is the link between Exodus 23:20, Isaiah 40:3 and the prologue? Gundry is one of several commentators to suggest that the passages have been selected *phonetically* to produce 'a euphony which welds vv 1-3 together and stresses the goodness of the news about Jesus'.[85] It seems a stretch, however, to describe the repeated genitive ending -ου as a

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[83] Marcus, *Mark 1-8,* 145.
[84] Marcus, *Mark 1-8,* 145.
[85] Gundry, *Apology for the Cross*, 36.

deliberate 'euphony'. The explanation is also less than satisfactory since Mark could have achieved a similar phonetic effect without recourse to the Old Testament.

Another suggestion is that these passages are *semantically* linked to their wider context in Mark. This is the reading of Suhl, author of the earliest monograph on Mark's use of the Old Testament. He argues that Mark simply employs the language of the Old Testament to make 'general assertions', 'expression[s] of the conviction - which requires no "proof" - that the events surrounding Jesus corresponded to the will of God.'[86] As was mentioned in the literature overview, Suhl concludes that Mark primarily employs the Old Testament for its semantic resonance, with the aim of presenting his gospel as 'schriftgemäß'.[87] Hatina builds on Suhl's work to argue that 'the quotation functions in a *more general manner*, indicating that the presence and function of the Baptist is consistent with, or according to, Scripture and thus consistent with the will of God' (original emphasis).[88] As this essay will later demonstrate, the introduction of 'the way of the Lord' in verses 2 and 3 does indeed create a strong semantic link with the Gospel's wider structure. Are these *semantic* connections, however, sufficient in themselves to explain this Old Testament composition? If Mark were solely interested in finding resonant Old Testament language to authenticate his narrative, why choose these particular passages? All of the key words in the citation are extremely common in the LXX. There are 748 occurrences of ὁδός, the specific phrase ὁδός Κυρίου occurs 10 times, ἄγγελος and ὁδός occur in close proximity 14 times, and ἄγγελος and ἀποστέλλω are paired 59 times. An emphasis solely on semantic

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[86] Alfred Suhl, *Die Funktion der alttestamentlichen Zitate und Anspielungen im Markusevangelium* (Gütersloher: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1965), 157: 'sie sind allgemeine Behauptungen, […] Ausdruck der keines "Beweises" bedürftigen Überzeugung, daß das Geschehen um Jesus Gottes Willen entsprach'.
[87] Ibid., 137.
[88] Thomas Hatina, *In Search of a Context: The Function of Scripture in Mark's Narrative* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 182.

links should therefore be reserved as a final explanation only if no stronger link between the passages cited and Mark's prologue can be found.

This stronger link is *contextual*. There is, in other words, a direct line stretching between the contexts of Exodus 23:20, Isaiah 40:3 and Mark's prologue. In Exodus 23:20, God tells Israel "Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. Pay careful attention to him and obey his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression, for my name is in him." Occurring directly after the inauguration of the covenant between God and Israel at Sinai in chapter 20, this promise is sometimes read as part of the blessings and curses that typically accompany an ancient covenant.[89] It is better understood, however, as forming an *inclusio* for the entire covenant inauguration together with the parallel blend of encouragement and warning in Exodus 19: 'If you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' (Ex 19:5-6).[90] Bracketing the covenant inauguration and anticipating the ensuing journey towards the promised land, Exodus 23:20 is therefore rooted in the very heart of the exodus.

There is considerable debate as to whether Isaiah 40:3 is similarly linked to the exodus journey. Lund, for example, has recently questioned the traditional view that this heralded 'way of the Lord' signals a new exodus.[91] Although it is possible to discern some

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[89] Philip Graham Ryken, *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005), 765.
[90] For a fuller exploration of this *inclusio* see: Douglas Stuart, *Exodus* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2006), 542.
[91] Øystein Lund, *Way Metaphors and Way Topics in Isaiah 40–55* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007). A key argument raised by Lund (and the earlier works he builds on) is that Isaiah is not anticipating a way of return out of exile - which could perhaps mirror the first exodus journey - but a way of divine visitation. This is the way *of the Lord*, not of his people. As Koole has previously argued, however, this argument rests on a false dichotomy. Although 'the return of Yahweh and that of the exiles seem to be two independent traditions', Koole notes how 'these traditions are connected with each other by DI [Deutero Isaiah]'. Koole builds his argument on Isaiah 52:7-12, where the author 'talks about Yahweh's joyously received return to Zion but goes straight on to urge the exiles to leave Babylon under Yahweh's protection' and Isaiah 40:1-11, which 'ends with the description of the Good Shepherd with his flock, [… suggesting both] the return and what follows it': J. L. Koole, *Isaiah III Volume 2, Isaiah 49-55* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 59.

echoes of the exodus in the opening verses of Isaiah 40,[92] the strongest link between this passage and the exodus motif is provided by the wider context of Isaiah. Berges is one of several scholars to identify Isaiah 40:1-11 as the 'Schaltstelle' for the surrounding material.[93] The unveiling of this salvation makes frequent use of the language of the exodus. Several allusions are made, for example, to the crossing of the Red Sea. The Lord is the one 'who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings forth chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished' (Is 43:16-17). It is he 'who says to the deep, "Be dry; I will dry up your rivers"' (Is 44:27). This God, 'who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over', will again cause 'the ransomed of the Lord [to] return and come to Zion with singing' (Is 51:10-11). The return from Babylon is also tied to God's provision during the wilderness years of the exodus. Isaiah 48:20, anticipating the joyful return from exile, links this in the very next verse to the exodus: Israel 'did not thirst when he led them through the deserts; he made water flow for them from the rock; he split the rock and the water gushed out' (Is 48:20). This past provision will become a future reality. God will 'make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water' (Is 41:18). He will 'make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert' (Is 43:19). He will 'pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground' (Is 44:3). As the exiles journey home along the 'bare heights', 'they shall feed along the ways […] for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water he will guide them' (Is 49:9). Just as Exodus 23:20 is drawn from the heart of the exodus journey, therefore, the opening lines of

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[92] One example, noted by Goldingay, is the covenant language of 'your God' in Isaiah 40:1, drawing on the inauguration of Israel's covenant with YHWH in Exodus 6:7: John Goldingay, *Isaiah for Everyone* (Louisville: Westminster Press, 2015), 12. Another example is the unexpected prominence of the wilderness, occurring twice in Isaiah 40:3, which is most naturally understood in light of the exodus-informed 'wilderness theology' explored in depth in the next chapter of this thesis.

[93] Ulrich Berges, *Jesaja* (Freiburg-im-Breisgau: Herder, 2008), 83: 'Diese Eröffnung des zweiten Großteils des Jesajabuches ist die Schaltstelle, in der vorausgehende Motive aufgenommen und nachfolgende vorbereitet werden'.

Isaiah 40 are embedded in a prophetic anticipation of a second and greater exodus. Both passages cited in Mark's opening citation are, therefore contextually anchored in the exodus tradition.

A common objection to this contextual reading, voiced by Hatina, is that it 'leads to the overshadowing of the narrative in which the quotations are embedded'.[94] This is a valid concern. What if, however, a contextual reading were shown to be coherent with a *prior assessment* of Mark's prologue? Putting aside the contexts of Exodus 23:20 and Isaiah 40:3 for a moment, what are the dominant features of Mark 1:1-15? The wilderness location is immediately apparent. As will be discussed at length in the next chapter of this thesis, the desert setting is regarded as one of the most prominent redactional features of the prologue. The messenger in verse 2 is located *in the wilderness*, just as the Baptist begins his ministry *in the wilderness*. It is *to this wilderness* location that Jesus first journeys in verse 9 to be baptised in the Jordan, and is then immediately thrust out by the Spirit in verse 12 *into the wilderness*. Mark is at pains to remind the reader in the very next verse that Jesus remained *in the wilderness* for the whole time of temptation - a fact that could seem so redundant by this point that it is omitted in a number of manuscripts.[95] As will be argued in the following chapter, this is not just a geographical description but a deliberate use of 'sacred topology', anchoring the narrative in the wilderness tradition of the exodus. This wilderness tradition, reinforced by the Baptist's desert garb and diet, is paired with the Jordan river through the prologue's chiastic structure, as gospel-wilderness-Jordan (verses 1-8) is followed by Jordan-wilderness-gospel (verses 9-15).[96] Verse 5 shows how these exodus locations become the

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[94] Hatina, *In Search of a Context,* 182.
[95] The scribes of K, *f*[1], 28, 69, 565, 700, 1424, 2542 and sy[s] replace ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ with the adverb ἐκεῖ. This is likely due to the seeming redundancy in the phrase ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ in Mark 1:13 after the εἰς τὴν ἔρημον in Mark 1:12.
[96] For a more detailed defence of this structure see: John Drury, "Mark 1:1-15: An Interpretation," in *Alternative Approaches to New Testament Study,* ed. A. E. Harvey (London: SPCK, 1973), 30.

centre of a new movement for the *entire* people of God - just as they had been during the exodus journey: '*all* the country of Judea and *all* Jerusalem were going out to [John] and were being baptised by him'. This hyperbolic statement, as Drury notes, signals 'a vast backtracking, the rolling back of history' as Israel returns 'to the threshold of their inheritance, the Jordan'.[97] This rich exodus symbolism is an expression of the opening declaration that this is 'the beginning of *the gospel* of Jesus Christ' (Mk 1:1). Marcus, commenting on this verse, notes that the term 'gospel' 'has its most important background in Deutero-Isaiah' and that, more specifically, Isaiah 40:9 functions as 'one of the fountainhead verses for the [New Testament] concept of εὐαγγέλιον.'[98] Mark's prologue is, therefore, fully consonant with the emphases of Exodus 23 and Isaiah 40. The advent of God's kingdom is presented here as a revival of exodus hope.

The Opening Citation and the Subsequent Narrative

This dissertation seeks to demonstrate that the exodus motif is not only *present* but *prominent* in Mark. The opening citation is one of the primary pieces of evidence for this argument. There are a number of indications that the exodus framework demonstrated here is not restricted simply to the prologue but colours the entire gospel. The first is the prominent placement of this citation. Unlike the other synoptic gospels, where the Old Testament citation follows the introduction of the Baptist later in the gospel, Mark places this quotation

[97] John Drury, "Mark 1:1-15: An Interpretation," 31-32.

[98] Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993, p. 18-19. Marcus is drawing here on the insights of Stuhlmacher: Peter Stuhlmacher, *Das paulinische Evangelium* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), 116-122.

immediately after the superscription.[99] Even more significantly, this is the only editorial citation in the gospel. As was noted in the introduction to this thesis, the use of the Old Testament elsewhere in the gospel is more subtle, woven into the narrative or embedded in dialogue for the careful hearer to discern. Here, however, these passages are explicitly introduced. A further indication of this citation's importance comes in the strong semantic ties with the wider gospel. Chapter four of this thesis will explore how the term ὁδός, here the primary link between Exodus 23:20 and Isaiah 40:3, becomes a structural key to the gospel, bridging the opening chapters in Galilee and the closing chapters in Jerusalem.

The opening citation is not only apparent as a hermeneutical lens for the later gospel because of its clear connections to the wider narrative, however, but also because of its dissimilarities. It is striking that these opening verses contain explicit concepts that are submerged in the subsequent narrative. These include the dialogue between the Father and pre-existent Son, the high Christology embedded in the titles υἱοῦ θεοῦ and κυρίου, and the agency of the Father in the ministry of the Baptist. The hearer is granted here a view 'behind the scenes', a window into the divine perspective on the life of Jesus. Only here and at the crucial narrative junctures of the transfiguration and crucifixion is such a perspective offered. R. H. Lightfoot captures this well when he writes 'that we find placed in our hands at the outset the key which the evangelist wishes us to have, in order that we may understand the person and office of the central Figure of the book'.[100]

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[99] Guelich, with whom both Marcus and Gundry agree, goes further to argue that the citation formula forms part of the superscription. He builds his argument on the citation formula 'Καθὼς γέγραπται' in verse 2, arguing on the basis of its usage across the LXX that its function is almost always *retrospective*. On this basis, Guelich advocates a translation of Mark 1:1-2 as 'the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, which Isaiah wrote about, saying…'. The argument is unconvincing, however, since this citation formula occurs only five times in the LXX and even these rare occurrences have little in common with its usage in Mark 1:1: Robert Guelich, *The Beginning of the Gospel: Mark 1:1-15* (Chicago: Chicago Society of Biblical Research, 1982), 6.

[100] R. H. Lightfoot, *The Gospel Message of St. Mark* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950) 17.

Conclusion

Mark 1:2-3 creates a dramatic irony that drives the ensuing narrative. This rich introduction grants the hearer an insight into Jesus that is hidden from the majority of characters in the following narrative as they struggle to discern: “Who is this?” (Mk 4:41). The opening citation reveals Jesus to be the pre-existent Son, the Lord who will be heralded by God’s promised messenger. More than this, however, the language of Exodus 23:20 and Isaiah 40:3 anchors this *dramatis personae* in Israel’s redemptive history. The Son of God has come to fulfil hopes as old as the exodus.

Chapter 2: Mark and the Wilderness

> John appeared, baptising in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. (Mk 1:4, own translation)

Few locations are as significant in Israel's redemptive history as the wilderness. The integral connection between the wilderness and the exodus journey lends this territory a life of its own, transforming it from a geographical setting to a synecdoche for Israel's founding moment. Throughout the Old Testament a 'wilderness theology' emerges, both looking backwards to the crucial years Israel spent in the desert and forwards to an eschatological return to this site. This chapter will argue that Mark uses this wilderness theology to locate his prologue in sacred space, causing it to straddle two worlds. On the one hand, its opening verses are firmly anchored in first-century Palestine. Crowds stream from Jerusalem and Judea, Jesus travels from Nazareth to the Jordan, and the first announcement of the Kingdom resounds in Galilee. On the other hand, the wilderness is woven into the fabric of the narrative, prominently featured in a way that evokes memories of the first great wilderness event, the exodus.

This use of sacred space in the prologue complements the introduction of the characters discussed in the previous chapter. It was there argued that Mark's main characters are rooted in redemptive history, introduced using the language of pivotal exodus texts. These are characters who, as it were, have stepped off the pages of the Old Testament to take up their roles in first-century Palestine. It is therefore fitting that the space they operate in should be similarly replete with echoes of the exodus.

This chapter will first explore the links between the exodus and the wilderness, outlining the contours of a wilderness theology that emerge in the Old Testament. It will then be argued that this rich wilderness tradition is clearly visible in Mark's use of 'sacred topology', beginning in the prologue and continuing throughout the subsequent references to the wilderness in the gospel.

The Wilderness Theology of the Exodus

No location is more entwined with the exodus than the wilderness. God first meets Moses in the burning bush 'at the back of the wilderness (ὑπὸ τὴν ἔρημον)' (Ex 3:1). Shortly afterwards, Aaron is sent by God 'into the wilderness (εἰς τὴν ἔρημον)' to join Moses (Ex 4:27). Their message for Pharaoh? Israel must be released to 'go three days' journey into the wilderness (εἰς τὴν ἔρημον)' to sacrifice to the Lord their God (Ex 3:18; 5:1; 7:16; 8:27). When Israel depart from Egypt, God takes them along 'the way of the wilderness (ὁδὸν τὴν εἰς τὴν ἔρημον)' (Ex 13:18) - not along the direct route to Canaan through Philistine territory. After crossing the Red Sea, Israel journey from 'the edge of the wilderness (παρὰ τὴν ἔρημον)' (Ex 13:20) into 'the Wilderness of Shur (εἰς τὴν ἔρημον Σουρ)' (Ex 15:22). The remainder of Exodus and the entirety of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy are located in this wilderness. From Exodus to Deuteronomy, the term ἔρημος occurs 112 times. Here Israel are reborn as a nation. Here they travel towards the promised land. Here they receive the covenant stipulations of God. Here they construct his tabernacle. Here the entire rebellious generation - with only two exceptions - die and are buried (Num 14:20-35). It is unsurprising, therefore, to find the wilderness functioning in later Jewish thought as a synecdoche for the entire exodus journey. Two contrasting emphases emerge as this 'wilderness theology' is

developed: the wilderness as a place of *divine testing* and of *divine provision*. The former is linked with Israel's rebellious failure, the latter with their innocent reliance.

First, the wilderness is collectively remembered as the place where Israel underwent *divine testing***.** The desert is an area where life does not thrive, where both food and water and scarce. The Old Testament emphasises that God deliberately took his people through this time of need to test them and see what was in their hearts. The Israelite's first trial, the bitter waters at Marah, are described in Exodus 15:25 as the place where God 'made a statute and ordinance for [Israel], and there he tested (ἐπείρασεν) them'. Similarly in Deuteronomy 8, as Moses reflects on the purpose of Israel's long wilderness journey, he instructs Israel to 'remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test (ἐκπειράσῃ) you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not' (Deut 8:2). Later in the same chapter, Moses applies this perspective specifically to the provision of manna. God 'fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and that he might test you (ἐκπειράσῃ σε), to do you good in the end' (Deut 8:16).

Almost without exception, however, the outcome of this divine testing is failure and rebellion. A play on words emerges - the people's predictable failure in the face of *divine testing* results in them *testing God* by their disobedience. This play of words can be most clearly seen in the incident at Massah and Meribah, where God brought water from the rock to satisfy Israel's thirst. Rather than trusting God to provide, Israel's need for water caused them to break out into quarrelling and 'to test (πειράζειν) the Lord by saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?" (Ex 17:7). Their unbelief is enshrined in the very name of the site, Massah and Meribah, rendered as πειρασμὸς καὶ λοιδόρησις in Exodus 17:7 LXX. The ambiguity of this title is explored in subsequent texts. Deuteronomy 33:8, for example, links Massah not to

Israel's testing of God but to God's testing of Israel, writing of Levi that God 'tested (ἐπείρασαν) him at Massah (ἐν πείρᾳ), and quarrelled with him at the waters of Meribah'.[101]

Israel's failure to rightly respond to God's testing, instead testing God by their rebellion, is a defining feature of the wilderness years. In God's judgement on Israel following their refusal to enter the promised land, for example, he states that 'none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have tested (ἐπείρασάν) me these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers' (Num 14:22-23). The 'ten times' here are interpreted in the Babylonian Talmud as references to ten defining instances of rebellion during the wilderness years.[102] More recently, commentators have tended towards reading it as 'an idiomatic expression for "over and over"'.[103] In either reading, the entire journey from Red Sea to Promised Land is tinged by Israel's rebellious testing of God. Psalm 95:8-10 similarly presents Israel's testing as a feature of the entire wilderness period: 'do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, as in the day of testing (τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ πειρασμοῦ) in the wilderness, when your fathers tested (ἐπείρασαν) me. For forty years I loathed that generation.'[104] Here, the phrase 'day of testing' recalls both 'particular incidents' and Israel's habitual rebellion 'throughout the 40 years' in the wilderness, using their fate to lend the

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[101] See also Psalm 81:7, which similarly describes Meribah as a place where God tested Israel, thus reversing the original meaning of this location as the place where Israel tested God.

[102] Babylonian Talmud *Arakin* 15b. Israel tested God on the following ten occasions: at the Red Sea, at Marah, in the wilderness of Sin, twice at Kadesh, at Rephidim, at Sinai, at Taberah, at Kibroth-Hattaavah, and on the border to the promised land. See: Jacob Neusner, *The Talmud of Babylonia: A New American Translation* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1984).

[103] Timothy Ashley, *The Book of Numbers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; 1993), 260.
A similar viewpoint is also expressed in the following works: George Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912), 158 and Philip Budd, *Numbers* (Waco: Word Books, 1984), 158.

[104] The same perspective can be found in Psalm 106:13-14, where Israel's testing of God is a defining feature of the wilderness years: 'They soon forgot his works; they did not wait for His counsel, but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tested (ἐπείϱασαν) God in the desert.'

Psalmist's warning about future disobedience 'great solemnity'.[105] The writer to Hebrews adjusts the syntax of the LXX, bringing out even more clearly that this testing of God occurred throughout the entire wilderness period. In the LXX the phrase 'for forty years' describes God's response to Israel's failure.[106] The quotation in Hebrews 3:9-20, however, links the 'forty years' to Israel's testing of God.[107] This reordering fits the author's wider argument that rebellion and testing were features of the entire wilderness period. As Enns observes, this negative portrayal of the wilderness years reverberates throughout reflections on the exodus journey, which was characterised by a repeated cycle of divine testing and Israel's failure.[108]

The wilderness theology that develops in the Old Testament is not wholly negative, however. Alongside the emphasis on testing and rebellion runs the theme of *divine provision* and Israel's innocence. Life does not naturally thrive in the wilderness, and yet Israel were able to remain there for 40 years through God's care. It was God who made the bitter waters of Marah sweet (Ex 15:25). Their daily manna was his provision (Ex 16:4), as were the quail that gave them meat (Ex 16:13). It was God who brought water gushing from the rock at Meribah (Ex 17:7; Num 20:13). His provision could even be seen in the fact that their

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[105] John Eaton, *The Psalms: A Historical and Spiritual Commentary with an Introduction and New Translation* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 338.

[106] Since the testing of the fathers already has a temporal referent (the relative pronoun οὗ linking it to the day of testing), the phrase 'τεσσαράκοντα ἔτη' is most closely connected to the following clause, describing God's response. This is reflected in the later addition of the verse numbers, which place the 'forty years' in verse 9:
(7) μὴ σκληρύνητε τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν ὡς ἐν τῷ παραπικρασμῷ κατὰ τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ πειρασμοῦ ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ (8) οὗ ἐπείρασαν οἱ πατέρες ὑμῶν ἐδοκίμασαν καὶ εἴδοσαν τὰ ἔργα μου (9) <u>τεσσαράκοντα ἔτη προσώχθισα τῇ γενεᾷ ἐκείνῃ</u> καὶ εἶπα ἀεὶ πλανῶνται τῇ καρδίᾳ καὶ αὐτοὶ οὐκ ἔγνωσαν τὰς ὁδούς μου

[107] The insertion of the phrase 'Therefore I was provoked with that generation' in Hebrews 3:10 splits up the 'forty years' from the divine judgement. It is worth noting that Hebrews 3:17 returns to the syntax of the LXX, attributing the 'forty years' to God's anger. This may reflect two different traditions regarding the wilderness years (cf. Peter Enns, "The interpretation of Psalm 95 in Hebrews 3.1-4.13" in *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel: Investigations and Proposals,* ed. C. A. Evans and J. A. Sanders (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 355). Alternatively, this may simply show that the whole wilderness period was one of both rebellion and judgement.

[108] Peter Enns, *Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 330.

'garments did not wear out', 'nor did [their] foot swell these forty years' (Deut 8:4). The Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32:10-14 expresses God's care for his wandering people with poetic beauty:

> He found [Israel] in a desert land (γῇ ἐρήμῳ) and in the wasteland, a howling wilderness; he encircled him, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle stirs up its nest, hovers over its young, spreading out its wings, taking them up, carrying them on its wings, so the Lord alone led him, and there was no foreign god with him.

The several Psalms commemorating the exodus deliverance draw attention to the lavish nature of God's provision throughout these years. Psalm 68:7-9, for example, describes the wilderness during the exodus journey as a well-watered landscape: 'when you, God, went out before your people, when you marched through the wilderness, the earth shook, the heavens poured down rain, before God, the One of Sinai, before God, the God of Israel. You gave abundant showers, O God; you refreshed your weary inheritance.' It was in this wilderness that Israel asked and God 'brought quail, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven. He opened the rock, and water gushed out; it ran in the dry places like a river' (Ps 105:39-40). Here 'the multitude of [God's] mercies' (Ps 106:7) were revealed, and the way in which that God 'led His people through the wilderness' is proof that 'his mercy endures forever' (Ps 136:16). Psalm 78:52 similarly reminisces about the desert as a place where God 'made his own people go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock' (Ps 78:52). Eaton notes that the theme of God's provision emerges here in tandem with the painful memories of the wilderness years, as the Psalmist weaves together 'the warmth of the shepherding imagery […] with the preceding account of Israel's rebelliousness.'[109]

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[109] Eaton, *The Psalms*, 284.

Reflections by the prophets on the wilderness years emphasise the special bond that existed between God and Israel in the wilderness. As Flight argues in his influential article on this topic, the primitive 'nomadic *idea*' of the exodus develops throughout the prophetic corpus into a 'nomadic *ideal*'. Seventh- and eighth-century writers began 'to think of the nomadic life of their fathers as the golden age of Israel's history' and longed 'for a return to the simple and uncorrupted faith of their fathers'.[110] Talmon, despite his general critique of Flight's 'nomadic ideal',[111] agrees that the prophets, in particular Isaiah, afford great redemptive significance to the wilderness. Several wilderness passages strikingly depict 'Israel [as] altogether free from the transgressions of which the trek generation so often is accused.'[112] Hosea, for example, describes Israel during the wilderness years as precious to God 'like grapes in the wilderness, […] like the first fruit on the fig tree in its first season' (Hos 9:10). Ironically, Israel's entrance into the promised land is here portrayed as the end of this intimacy: 'when they had pasture, they were filled; they were filled and their heart was exalted; therefore they forgot Me' (Hos 13:5-6). Jeremiah 2:2 likewise portrays God's desire for a return to the innocence of Israel in the wilderness: 'I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown.'

It is unsurprising to find in the prophets what Estelle describes as 'the transformation of [this wilderness] motif towards a positive, eschatological hope.'[113] An expectation

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[110] John Flight, "The Nomadic Idea and Ideal in the Old Testament," *JBL* 42 (1923), 223. Flight's work represents an expansion of Budde's earlier thesis: Karl Budde, "Das nomadische Ideal im Alten Testament," *Preussische Jahrbücher* 88 (1896), 57-79.

[111] Talmon argues that the wilderness was only ever envisaged as the *penultimate* redemptive goal, the place of preparation for the true focus on a renewed promised land: 'Ultimately the "desert" became the locale of a period of purification and *preparation* for the achievement of a new goal. This goal is the conquest of the Holy Land, culminating in the seizure of Jerusalem, and the re-establishment in it of the supreme sanctuary of Israel. […] *The desert is a passage to this goal, not the goal itself'* (emphasis added). Shemaryahu Talmon, "The "Desert Motif" in the Bible and in Qumran Literature," in *Biblical Motifs: Origins and Transformations*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 63.

[112] Ibid., p. 60.

[113] Bryan D. Estelle, "Motifs and Old Testament Theology," *Unio cum Christo* 5 (2019), 44.

emerged that the special relationship between Israel and God in the desert would be revived in the last days. The wilderness would no longer simply be a place of *past* provision but of *future* blessing. Hosea 2:14-15 is one of the clearest examples of this eschatological hope. Although God cast off his people in the exile, he promises a future rebirth: 'therefore, behold, I will allure [Israel], and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt.' Isaiah similarly anticipates the wilderness becoming the focal point of future divine blessing. The ancient transformation of the wilderness into a paradise by the waters of God's goodness will happen again at the end of time. When humiliated Israel is finally restored, 'the wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose […] for waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.' (Is 35:1, 6). In Isaiah 41:18 God promises to 'open rivers in desolate heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; [to] make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.' Just as God once shepherded Israel in the wilderness (Ps 78:52), so in the last days he will again 'feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs with his arm' (Isaiah 40:11). Not only will the wilderness again be a place of abundant provision, it will also see the return of God's presence. Isaiah 40:3, quoted in Mark's opening verses, anticipates 'the voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God."' This eschatological hope of God's presence in the wilderness is repeated in Isaiah 35:8, where 'the Highway of Holiness' shall emerge in the desert. It is then, as God once again provides his people with 'waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert', that 'this people I have formed for Myself […] shall declare My praise' (Is 43:19-21).

This positive recollection of the wilderness period, together with its associated eschatological hopes, continued into the first century AD. Philo's treatise *On the Decalogue*, for example, recalls the close relationship between God and his people in the wilderness. God chose ‘the depths of the desert’ precisely because it was ‘barren not only of cultivated fruits but also of water fit for drinking’ and therefore cast Israel upon God more fully. The daily reminders that ‘God gave abundance of the means of life’ made them receptive to the laws of God. They therefore received from him all the more readily not only the ‘mere life’ of food and drink, but the ‘good life’ of divine laws and ordinances.[114] The community at Qumran likewise reflects the hopes bound up with the wilderness. In his lengthy survey of the structure and purpose of life at Qumran, Mauser builds a strong argument that this community ‘reflected the conviction of the supreme importance of the wilderness in the eschatological drama,’ thereby embodying ‘the great strength of the wilderness concept and its combination with the picture of eschatology’.[115] The eschatological power of the wilderness location is illustrated by Josephus, who records a string of popular uprising that centred around desert hopes. In *The Jewish War* 2.259 he writes of a certain group who, ‘under the pretence of divine inspiration fostering revolutionary changes, persuaded the multitude to act like madmen, and led them out into that desert under the belief that God would there give them tokens of deliverance’.[116] Similarly in *The Jewish War* 2.261-3, he

[114] Philo, *On the Decalogue*, trans. F. H. Colson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937), 265.
[115] Ulrich Mauser, *Christ in the Wilderness: The Wilderness Theme in the Second Gospel and Its Basis in the Biblical Tradition* (London: SCM, 1963), 61. Mauser argues that the members of Qumran viewed themselves as ‘exiles in the desert’ on the basis of 1 QM 1.2, 1 QS 8.12-16 and 1 QS 9.19. In addition, the primacy of 40 years in their eschatology between the Teacher of Righteousness dying and the man of lies being revealed (cf. CD 20:13) suggests that the community had an underlying ‘wilderness theology’. He also argues that the structure of the community reflects their general ‘tendency to relive the exodus experience under Moses with its divisions into tribes, thousands, hundreds, fifties, tens’ (cf. 1 QS 2.21; Ex 18;25, Deut 1:15). A further piece of evidence he cites is the close similarity between the regulations recorded in 1 QM 7:3-7 and the language of the Mosaic stipulations for wilderness life, for example in Numbers 5.
[116] Josephus*, The Jewish War*, trans. J. Thackeray et al (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 425.

records an uprising led my an Egyptian who summoned 30,000 people to the desert and, from there, marched on the mount of Olives (the same Egyptian referenced in Acts 21:38).[117] Even after the fall of Jerusalem, eschatological hopes continued to be raised and dashed by the allure of wilderness heroes, for example Jonathan, a member of the Sicarii, who 'won the ear of not a few of the indigent class, and led them forth into the desert, promising them a display of signs and apparitions' (*War* 7.438).[118] Jesus himself seemed to be aware of the allure of the wilderness as an eschatological location, warning his disciples that 'if they say to you, "Look, [the Christ] is in the desert!" do not go out' (Mt 24:26).

The two reflections on the time in the wilderness noted above seem to be contradictory. How can the wilderness be a place of *divine provision* and of *divine testing*? How can it be a location where Israel were both *innocently reliant* and *provocatively rebellious*? How can it form the backdrop for *past judgement* and *eschatological restoration*? The tension appears unproblematic in early Jewish writings, however, with a number passages combining both strands of thought. In Deuteronomy 8:2-4, for example, Moses speaks in one breath of God's tenderness and testing in the wilderness. The pairing of Psalms 105 and 106 conveys the same contrasting interpretation of the desert years, with divine blessing (Ps 105:37-45) inseparable from human rebellion (Ps 106:13-33). Hosea 9:10 similarly encapsulates in a single verse how Israel in the wilderness were both innocent 'like grapes in the wilderness, […] the firstfruits on the fig tree in its first season' and an 'abomination' as 'they went to Baal Peor' (cf. Num 25:3). The preservation of these parallel emphases continues into the first century BC, as seen in the *Wisdom of Solomon.* The author recalls that due to Israel's rebellion 'the experience of death touched also the righteous, and a

[117] Josephus, *The Jewish War*, 425.
[118] Ibid., 431.

plague came upon the multitude in the desert' (Wis 18:20).[119] Despite this, the wilderness journey could still be described as a time when 'the whole creation in its nature was fashioned anew, complying with your commands, so that your children might be kept unharmed.' (Wis 19:6). To quote Hiebert: 'nostalgia for desert life and the negative associations are, ironically, compatible. Israel is forced to rely upon God in the most inhospitable of climates, and God shows his power to sustain them, [… yet] the desert is also God's crucible, in which he tests Israel.'[120]

Sacred Topology in Mark

What is the connection between this rich wilderness theology and the gospel of Mark? The answer begins with a recognition of the prominence of the wilderness in Mark's prologue. The voice prophesied by Isaiah and quoted in Mark 1:3 cries out in the wilderness. The Baptist appears to fulfil his ministry in the wilderness in Mark 1:4. The entire city of Jerusalem and all of Judea journey out to join him in the wilderness in Mark 1:5. In Mark 1:9 Jesus comes from Nazareth in Galilee to the same wilderness to be baptised. Rising from the waters of baptism, Jesus is driven by the Spirit further into the wilderness in Mark 1:12. It is in this wilderness, as Mark reminds the reader again in the very next verse, that Jesus remains and is tempted for forty days. The wilderness location is even baked into the minute details of this passage. It was observed in the previous section that the Baptist's clothing and diet are evocative of a wilderness lifestyle. Camel's hair, leather, locusts and wild honey are some of the only resources available to desert dwellers.

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119 Quotations from the *Wisdom of Solomon* here and elsewhere are from the New Revised Standard Version.
120 Paula Hiebert, "Wilderness," in *The Oxford Guide to People and Places of the Bible*, ed. B. M. Metzger and M. D. Coogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 321.

Various explanations have been offered for the prominence of the wilderness in these verses. Marcus concludes that it can only be accidental 'obsolescence' - the rough edges left by a 'Markan conglomeration of originally disparate material'.[121] Would not even an unskilled editor notice the same term appearing four times in the space of such a short prologue, however? The tools of the redaction critic are useful here. Marxsen, for example, argues that the reverse is true. The references to wilderness are not obsolete remnants of disparate material but proof that the gospel tradition was carefully edited. How else to reconcile the description of the well-watered site of the Baptist's ministry at the Jordan as a 'wilderness' in verse 4 - a description which the other synoptic writers remove? How else to explain Jesus' baptism in this wilderness being immediately followed by the Spirit driving him 'into the wilderness'?[122] Mauser expresses the same sentiment in his play on Schmidt's famous statement: the 'theme of the wilderness […] serves as the string on which the beads of tradition available to Mark for the composition of the prologue were assembled'.[123]

To what extent does this desert emphasis align with the wilderness theology outlined above? It was noted that *divine provision* and *divine testing* are the primary facets of this theology. Both find their expression in Mark's prologue. To start with divine provision, the wilderness in Mark 1 is the place of God's special care. Only in the wilderness is the voice heard proclaiming the way of the Lord (Mk 1:3). Only in the wilderness is the forgiveness of sins preached (Mk 1:4). Only in the wilderness is there the promise of a coming one, stronger even than John, who is able to baptise with the Holy Spirit (Mk 1:8). Only in the wilderness is the sky torn apart - a sign of the eschaton - as the Father's voice is heard and the Spirit

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[121] Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 138.
[122] Willi Marxsen, *Der Evangelist Markus: Studien zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Evangeliums* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959), 36.
[123] Mauser, *Christ in the Wilderness,* 101-2.

descends on the Beloved Son (Mk 1:10-11). Just as in the time of the exodus, this barren place with no natural resources becomes the fitting backdrop to God's supernatural provision. In tandem with this, the wilderness is the place of humble reliance on God. Just as later prophets looked back on the wilderness wandering as a time of innocence, unpolluted by the corrupting influence of life in Canaan, so too the characters of Mark's prologue humble themselves before God. The inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea, at virtually all other points in the gospel painted in a negative light, here give up their city comforts *en masse* and move out to the wilderness: 'Mark is running the nation's history backwards. Now city and land stand empty as they go back to the threshold of their inheritance, the Jordan; and not just *to* it but *into* it, to be baptised.'[124]

There is, however, a tension in the text. Just as the exodus wilderness tradition combined divine blessing and testing, so too the wilderness in Mark's prologue is not just a place of unadulterated bliss. This same wilderness becomes a place of the most extreme testing in verses 12-13, worth quoting in the original:

> Καὶ εὐθὺς τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτὸν ἐκβάλλει εἰς τὴν ἔρημον. καὶ ἦν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ τεσσεράκοντα ἡμέρας πειραζόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ Σατανᾶ, καὶ ἦν μετὰ τῶν θηρίων, καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι διηκόνουν αὐτῷ.

A number of features are striking here. The first is the emphasis on divine agency in this time of testing. The violence of the verb ἐκβάλλει is compounded by the arresting placement of the Spirit in the clause - an inversion of Mark's usual style where the verb precedes the subject.[125] Whereas Satan features more prominently in the parallel synoptic accounts and

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[124] John Drury, "Mark 1:1-15: An Interpretation," in *Alternative Approaches to New Testament Study*, ed. A. E. Harvey (London: SPCK, 1973), 31.

[125] For an comprehensive survey of Markan subject-verb order see: Max Zerwick, *Untersuchungen zum Markus-Stil* (Rome: Pontifical Bible Institute, 1937), 76-81.

dialogues at length with Jesus, Mark's reference to him is as brief as possible, relegated to the end of the clause. The second is the emphasis on wilderness. Although Jesus was already in the wilderness for his baptism, he is now driven even further into the wilderness for his time of testing, a fact repeated twice and colourfully illustrated by the reference to the wild animals.[126] The third is the similarity between this account and Israel's period of divine testing in the wilderness. As will be argued at length in chapter five, Mark shows little interest throughout the gospel in precise chronology. The few exceptions to this rule are his insertions of 'sacred time', where chronology borrowed from redemptive history features in the gospel narrative.[127] The reference to the 40 days of testing is a case in point. The parallel to Israel's time of testing is hard to miss: 'you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these *forty years* in the wilderness, that he might humble you, *testing you* to know what was in your heart' (Deut 8:2). Not only this, but just like Israel Jesus knows angelic support in the face of testing. In the exodus, God promised Israel that he would 'send an angel before you to guard you on the way' (Ex 23:20). Now Jesus himself knows the upholding of angels in times of testing, the use of the imperfect διηκόνουν rather than the aorist suggesting continued care (Mk 1:13).[128] The outcome to this testing is very different than that of Israel's wilderness wanderings, however. Israel responded to divine testing with failure - ultimately testing God himself in their stubborn rebellion. Jesus, however, emerges unblemished from the wilderness testing. In Exodus, God's 'first-born Son'

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[126] See *Wisdom of Solomon* 16, where 'a multitude of animals' (v1) and 'the terrible rage of wild animals' (v5) are central features in the description of Israel's wilderness years.

[127] See: Eugene Boring, "Mark 1:1-15 and the Beginning of the Gospel," *Semeia* 52 (1991), 67. Boring argues that 'the narrative is located in terms of the story time of God's saving acts, rather than in terms of secular history'.

[128] This reading of Mark 1:12-13 as a time of *divine* testing is not intended to exclude or minimise the parallel emphasis in these verses on the conflict between Jesus and Satan. (For an excellent commentary on this conflict see: Ernest Best, *The Temptation and the Passion: The Markan Soteriology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 15. See also: Mauser, *Christ in the Wilderness,* 142.)

(Ex 4:22) failed the test. Now his ‘beloved Son’ (Mk 1:11) passes it. This representative function of Jesus’ life is already latent in the preceding narrative. The promise of Exodus 23:20, originally given to the people of Israel, is quoted in Mark’s opening citation with reference to Jesus. This same representation can be detected in the close grammatical parallels between verses 5 and 9:

Mark 1:5	Mark 1:9
καὶ ἐξεπορεύετο πρὸς αὐτὸν	ἦλθεν Ἰησοῦς
πᾶσα ἡ Ἰουδαία χώρα καὶ οἱ Ἱεροσολυμῖται πάντες	ἀπὸ Ναζαρὲτ τῆς Γαλιλαίας
καὶ ἐβαπτίζοντο	καὶ ἐβαπτίσθη
ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ ποταμῷ	εἰς τὸν Ἰορδάνην ὑπὸ Ἰωάννου

The many and the one are analogous. Both retrace the journey into the wilderness and go down into the humbling waters of baptism. Jesus continues his work on their behalf, reliving their time of testing to emerge victorious in their place.

This ‘wilderness theology’ of divine blessing and testing is not confined to Mark’s prologue. All other references to wilderness in Mark are also fully consonant with these emphases. In 1:45, Jesus can no longer enter towns because of the mass hysteria about his miraculous powers, and so he retires to wilderness places. When the crowds stream to him, they find that his presence transforms this barren area into a place of healing. Divine provision in the wilderness is seen even more clearly in the feeding miracles (Mk 6:30-44; 8:1-10). In the feeding of the 5,000, as in the prologue, there is an emphasis on the wilderness location that borders on redundancy. Jesus calls his disciples to retire to a wilderness location (Mk 6:31), they travel in the boat to a wilderness location (Mk 6:32), and the disciples bemoan the wilderness location when they realise that the crowd has no food on hand (Mk 6:35). The exodus language permeating both feeding miracles warrants an entire section in its

own right, but a few observations may help here to show how, once again, Mark's wilderness connects seamlessly to the great exodus wilderness tradition. Just as in the wilderness wanderings, the miracles occur in a region so barren that there is no human possibility of finding sufficient food for the crowd - a fact emphasised by the panicked disciples (Mk 6:35; 8:4). Just as Israel were organised in the wilderness into groups of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens (Ex 18:21, 25), so Jesus organises the crowds into groups of hundreds and fifties (Mk 6:40).[129] As noted above, God's presence in the wilderness made it a place of unexpected rest for his people: 'When you, God, went out before your people, when you marched through the wilderness, the earth shook, the heavens poured down rain. […] You gave abundant showers, O God; you refreshed your weary inheritance' (Ps 68:7-9). Jesus likewise chooses the wilderness as the place to give his weary and hungry disciples rest (Mk 6:31). As Lane comments, 'the ancient hope of rest within the wilderness is to be fulfilled as Jesus gathers his disciples to a wilderness-place that they may be by themselves. The disciples and the multitudes who pursue them prove to be the people of the new exodus. The presence of Jesus and the provision of God will give the time of withdrawal the character of rest within the wilderness'.[130] In addition, Isaiah's eschatological hopes of blossom in the desert may well be the background for Mark's surprising reference to 'green grass' in the wilderness as Jesus prepares an abundant meal for the crowds (Mk 6:39). For the crowds, 'reclining' as at a banqueting table (Mk 6:39), the wilderness has become a place of blessing and provision.

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[129] For a number of further possible parallels between this feeding miracle and the exodus see: Kim Sun Wook, "The Wilderness as a Place of the New Exodus in Mark's Feeding Miracles (Mark 6:31–44 and 8:1–10)," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 48 (2018), 62–75.

[130] William Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 225.

Conclusion

The desert is more than a geographical detail in Mark. Its seamless interaction with the wilderness theology developed throughout Jewish writings anchors this location in the exodus tradition. This is the place where God provides abundantly in spite of human inability. This is where his redemptive work will begin (again). This is also where he will test his Son as his son Israel was once tested. There is, however, discontinuity with the wilderness of the exodus. Divine testing in the original wilderness led to repeated failure and doubt. This time, however, it is a place of unadulterated triumph. The tension of Israel's wilderness years between faith and rebellion is abolished. For Jesus, the wilderness is a place of humble dependence and intimacy with God. In Mark we therefore find the wilderness tradition freed from its negative connotations. Isaiah's vision of unadulterated joy in the wilderness has become reality: 'the wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. […] They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God' (Is 35:1-2).

This adaptation of Israel's wilderness theology is restricted to the opening chapters, however. The feeding of the 4,000 in Mark 8 contains the gospel's final reference to the wilderness. This is not incidental. As the next two chapters will demonstrate, a major narrative shift occurs in Mark 8:27 as the exodus motif takes on a new and unexpected form in the gospel's central section. Here, on the mount of transfiguration and Jesus' subsequent way towards suffering, there is an inversion of the triumphant exodus hopes that have been kindled in these opening chapters.

Chapter 3: The Exodus Motif and the Transfiguration (Mark 9:1-13)

The opening citation and the wilderness motif have embedded the prologue, and the opening chapters of Mark more broadly, in the redemptive world of the exodus. This gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has here been presented as *the exodus revisited*. Jesus is the new recipient of the wilderness promise in Exodus 23:20. He is the Lord, whose heralded arrival fulfils the new exodus hopes of Isaiah 40:3. He is the Son of God, able to withstand divine testing in the wilderness where God's son Israel once failed. His miraculous provision in the desert breathes new life into exodus memories of divine blessing. This changes, however, towards the end of Mark 8. The exodus motif, it will be argued in this and the following chapter, remains a prominent feature of the narrative. In the central section of the gospel, however, this motif is *inverted*.

This chapter will focus on Jesus' transfiguration in Mark 9:2-13. Following an exploration of the relevant Old Testament background in the three exodus theophanies, several reasons will be given for understanding the mount of transfiguration as a *second Sinai*. Replete with links to the three exodus theophanies on Sinai, in particular the theophany in Exodus 24, this narrative is anchored is a rich theological tradition. It will then be argued that the transfiguration marks a new section in the gospel, the second major development after the prologue. The movement from prologue to transfiguration thus recalls the exodus journey from initial deliverance to the mountain of God. As the narrative progresses, however, it becomes clear that Jesus' life will sharply diverge from the familiar exodus pattern. The first exodus progressed from Sinai to the tabernacling presence of God, the architectural embodiment of the mountaintop experience. Jesus, however, does not linger but

depart from the mountaintop. He is now on a direct journey to the cross, where his glory revealed on the mountaintop will not be enshrined but abandoned.

From Egypt To the Mountain, From the Mountain To the Tent

Within the exodus' wilderness setting, a single location looms quite literally larger than any other. Sinai, also referred to as Horeb,[131] emerges as the geographical centre of the wilderness years. Here, on the 'mountain of God' (Ex 3:1), Moses first meets the Lord and is commissioned to lead the exodus journey. Here, the promise is given that an emancipated Israel shall return to 'serve God on this mountain' (Ex 3:12). It is on this 'mountain of God' (Ex 4:27) that Aaron meets Moses in the next chapter. After Israel cross the Red Sea, they journey directly to Sinai (Ex 18:5). A vast tract of the Pentateuch is then filled with Israel's encampment at the base of Sinai. It is not until Numbers 10 that the Israelites finally leave the mountain for the Promised Land. During this extended Sinai pericope the whole foundation of the nation is laid. The law of God is given (Ex 20), the covenant with God is ratified (Ex 24), and the tabernacle of God is detailed and then constructed (Ex 24-40). Reflections on the wilderness journey in Deuteronomy confirm the centrality of this mountain setting. Johnstone observes that although it took Israel a laborious six weeks to travel from the Red Sea to Sinai, a period described in detail in Exodus 12:37-19:2, the summary of this exodus journey in Deuteronomy 1-11 'provides no information about the route through the wilderness from the Sea to the Mountain. There are no data on the route

[131] Michael Coogan, "Horeb," in *The Oxford Guide to People and Places of the* Bible, ed. B. M. Metzger and M. D. Coogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). Although a minority of scholars see Horeb and Sinai as two different locations, Coogan argues that 'an attempt to locate two different peaks is misguided'. His conclusion rests on the interchangeable use of these two titles for a single referent in several passages across the Pentateuch and in Sirach 48:7, which describes Elijah's meeting with God on Horeb as occurring 'on Sinai'.

before Horeb' (emphasis original).[132] This information has been hidden by the shadow of the mountain, he concludes, to highlight the direct progression from Red Sea to Sinai.[133] Dozeman detects this same emphasis on Sinai within Exodus. Written from a source critical perspective, his commentary on Exodus majors on the tensions between the text's perceived original sources. When writing on Sinai, however, he concludes that this mountain functions as the *organising principle* of the Israelites' wilderness journey - a principle shared by both priestly and non-priestly sources.[134] The start of the exodus journey can therefore be depicted in the following way:

The Exodus Journey	
Exodus Deliverance	Presence of God on Sinai

Of particular relevance to Mark's account of the transfiguration are the three Sinai theophanies recorded in Exodus 19-20, 24-31 and 33-34. As will be demonstrated later in this chapter, the closest parallels to Mark 9:2-13 occur in Exodus 24. This chapter moves from a cultic ceremony, which seals the covenant between God and Israel with blood, to a theophany on Sinai. Whilst the people remained at the base of the mountain, Moses ascends with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, along with the 70 elders of Israel (Ex 24:9). On the mountain they 'see the God of Israel', observing 'under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness' (Ex 24:9). Here they behold God, eating and drinking in his presence (Ex 24:11). This intimate scene, a far cry from the terror-inducing theophany of Exodus 19:16-25, is 'the proof that YHWH had entered into the covenant with Israel and was

[132] William Johnstone, "From the Sea to the Mountain" in *Studies in the Book of Exodus: Redaction - Reception - Interpretation*, ed. Marc Vervenne (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996), 247. (The sole exception to this general suppression of the pre-Sinai period is Deuteronomy 9:7.)

[133] Johnstone, "From the Sea to the Mountain", 249. Further evidence for this argument comes from Exodus 3:12, where the 'sign' of the Exodus given to Moses is that he will return to serve God on mount Sinai.

[134] Thomas Dozeman, *Commentary on Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 123.

prepared to signalise it through unique closeness to God.'[135] As the narrative continues, Moses alone (Ex 24:1) is permitted to reach the summit of the mountain. There, shrouded in cloud, he waits for six days (Ex 24:16). On the seventh day, God calls to Moses 'out of the midst of the cloud' (Ex 24:16). His message? Moses is construct a tabernacle (σκηνή).

Why should a tabernacle form the climax of this theophany? In a 1983 study that prompted a raft of subsequent scholarship, Lundquist proposed that the Israelite sanctuary functioned as the 'architectural embodiment of the cosmic mountain'.[136] This tent imbues the fleeting theophany on Sinai with permanence, preserving the mountaintop experience in a physical structure. In the most extensive recent monograph on this theme, Morales provides five reasons for understanding 'the tabernacle's function as a portable Sinai':[137] both tabernacle and mountain have three separate 'districts of holiness', each with strict rules of access (the base/outer court, the mountainside/holy place and the summit/holy of holies); God's voice is only heard on Sinai and within the tent; both mountain and tabernacle are enveloped by the cloud of God's glory; the two tablets carved on the summit of Sinai find their permanent home in the tabernacle; and sacrifice is required to mediate access to both mountain and tabernacle.[138] A further reason is suggested by Hauge, who notes that mountain and sanctuary imagery emerge as 'two aspects of one overarching concept' in later Jewish thought.[139] One of the most prominent examples is Psalm 24, which seamlessly transitions

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[135] Rainer Albertz, *Exodus* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2015), 141: 'Das Wunder, dass der gewaltige Himmelskönig seine gefährliche göttliche Aura so weit einschränkte, dass die Abgesandten Israels überleben konnten, war […] der Beweis, das JHWH in den Bund mit Israel eingetreten und es mit einer einzigartigen Gottesnähe auszuzeichnen bereit war'

[136] John Lundquist, "What is a Temple? A Preliminary Typology" in *The Quest for the Kingdom of God: Studies in Honor of George E. Mendenhall*, ed. Alberto Green et al. (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 207.

[137] Michael L. Morales, *The Tabernacle Pre-Figured: Cosmic Mountain Ideology in Genesis and Exodus* (Leuven: Peeters, 2012).

[138] Ibid., 255ff.

[139] Martin Hauge, *The Descent From the Mountain: Narrative Patterns in Exodus 19-40* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 102ff.

from 'the mountain of the Lord (τὸ ὄρος τοῦ κυρίου)' to the temple imagery of 'the holy place (τόπῳ ἁγίῳ)' (Ps 24:3). This theological equivalence, he argues, provides the 'conceptual coherence' to Exodus 24, 'a story centred around Moses on the mountain continued by a story of tent construction'.[140] The exodus thus progresses as follows:[141]

First exodus		
Exodus Deliverance	Presence of God on Sinai	Mountain Theophany Prolonged in the Tabernacle (σκηνή)

The Mount of Transfiguration: A Second Sinai

Mark 9:2-10 is replete with parallels to Sinai, especially to the theophany in Exodus 24. The broad contours of the narrative immediately suggest a connection. Just as Sinai is the definitive mountain in the exodus narrative, the mount of transfiguration is set apart by Mark as the gospel's only ὄρος ὑψηλὸν (9:2). It is on the summit of the mountain that both narratives climax with the voice of God resounding from the cloud. The details of both passages strengthen these broader links. Mark 9:2 records that the events on the mountain

[140] Hauge, *The Descent From the Mountain*, 102.

[141] The goal of the exodus, entrance into the promised land, should not be allowed to overshadow the significance of these initial stages. Several factors suggest that the presence of God with his people (both on the mountain and in the tabernacle) is scarcely less of an exodus goal. Exodus 3:8, containing the promise of deliverance 'to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey', is followed in verse 12 by the promise: 'when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain'. This emphasis on worship in God's presence is reflected in Moses' demand of Pharaoh, that Israel should be released from Egypt to 'sacrifice to the Lord our God' (Ex 3:18; 5:1; 7:16; 8:27).The cumulative effect of these statements, observes Davies, is to 'place worship at the climax of the coming deliverance' (Graham Davies, *Exodus 1-18: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (London: T&T Clark, 2020), 259). The Song of the Sea in Exodus 15 similarly combines the geographical goal of the exodus (entrance into the promised land) with its spiritual goal. Verses 14 to 16 record how the Canaanite nations have heard of God's deliverance and tremble in terror as Israel now approach. They are bracketed, however, by a celebration of how 'you have guided [Israel] by your strength to your holy abode' (Ex 15:13) and how 'you will bring them in and plant them on your own *mountain*, the place, O Lord, which you have made for your abode, the *sanctuary*, O Lord, which your hands have established' (Ex 15:17). As 'the imagery of the sanctuary incorporates into the mythology of the divine mountain', the song reveals that 'the goal of the journey is the divine sanctuary' (Thomas Dozeman, *Commentary on Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 339).

transpired ‘after 6 days’. This precise chronology stands out starkly from Mark’s usual practice. Where other pericopes are connected by the ubiquitous ‘immediately’ (e.g., Mk 1:10; 1:12; 1:18 etc.) or the vague ‘after some days’ (e.g., Mk 1:9; 2:1 etc.), the reference here to ‘six days’ has prompted considerable debate. As chapter five of this thesis will argue, there are strong reasons for reading the few precise chronological markers in Mark as indicators of ‘sacred time’. Reading the ‘six days’ in Mark 9:2 as primarily theological suggests a link to Exodus 24:16: ‘the glory of the Lord dwelt on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it *six days*. And on the seventh day [God] called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud’.

A further parallel to Exodus 24 is Jesus’ ascent with only Peter, James, and John (Mk 9:2). A number of scholars have noted the connection to Exodus 24:9, where Moses takes only three named companions (Aaron, Nadab and Abihu) to ascend the mountain with him.[142] The exclusive nature of this mountaintop experience is reinforced by Mark’s tautological formula κατ’ ἰδίαν μόνους in 9:2. Characters at other points in the gospel are described as either μόνος (Mk 6:47) or κατ’ ἰδίαν (Mk 4:34; 6:31; 7:33; 9:28; 13:3), but only here are the phrases combined. The rhetorical force of this phrase may echo the threefold emphasis on exclusivity in Exodus 24:2, which states that Moses must come *alone* (μόνος), the others *shall not come near* (οὐκ ἐγγιοῦσιν), and the people *shall not come up* (οὐ συναναβήσεται). Just as the people of Israel were not permitted to share in Moses’ experience, so too the transfiguration is reserved for only a few and, at Jesus’ instruction on the descent from the mountain, must remain a closely guarded secret until his resurrection (Mk 9:9).

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[142] For example: R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002), 348; and Rikki Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 127.

The much debated appearance of Moses and Elijah on the mountain also suggests a link to mount Sinai. In 1 Kings 19:9-18 Elijah meets with God on mount Horeb (Sinai). His experience is not only geographically connected to Moses' meetings with God on Sinai, but is theologically linked through the phrase 'mountain of God' (1 Kgs 19:8). This phrase, recurring throughout the early chapters of Exodus (Ex 3:1; 4:27; 18:5; 24:13), ceases with the construction of the tabernacle as the new dwelling of God.[143] Its only occurrence beyond this point is in the theophany on Horeb in 1 Kings 19, an 'intentional' reminder that 'Elijah is about to experience the peculiar confrontation that was heretofore granted only to Moses'.[144] It is fitting that Moses and Elijah, the only figures to have met with God on Sinai, should therefore join Jesus atop this second Sinai.

Hobbs draws out another connection with the Sinai theophany in the chaotic scene awaiting Jesus on his descent from the mountain. After receiving the instructions for the tabernacle from God on the mountain, Moses comes down from Sinai in Exodus 32 to find 'a stiff-necked people' (Ex 32:9) dancing around the golden calf. Jesus similarly descends from the mountain in Mark 9:14ff to find a tumultuous crowd arguing over the disciples' inability to heal a demon-possessed boy. His description of them as a 'faithless generation (γενεὰ ἄπιστος)' and his exasperated cry '*How long* am I to be with you? *How long* am I to bear with you?' (Mk 9:19) seems to be a 'composite of the various groans [of God] beginning with the discovery of Israel's faithlessness at Moses' descent from the mountain':[145] the 'stiff-necked people' of Exodus 32:9; God's frustration in Numbers 14:11 '*How long* will this people

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[143] Commenting on the fact that all references to the 'mountain of God' cease after the tabernacle is built, Dozeman concludes that 'all ritual and cultic meals on the mountain of God function as a prologue to the establishment of the tent of meeting' (Dozeman, *Commentary on Exodus,* 124).

[144] Walter Brueggemann, *1 and 2 Kings: A Commentary* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2000), 235.

[145] E. C. Hobbs, "The Gospel of Mark and the Exodus," Ph.D. diss. (University of Chicago, 1958), 45ff.

despise me? *How long* will they not believe in me?'; and the summary portrayal of Israel in the wilderness as a 'faithless generation (γενεὰ ἄπιστος)' in Deuteronomy 32:20.

The literary framework of Mark 9:2-13 cements the connection with Exodus 24. The next chapter of this dissertation will look in more detail at the structure of Mark, but is it sufficient to note at this point that the transfiguration occurs at the opening of the central section of the gospel. Stretching from 8:27 to 10:52, this section follows the journey of Jesus and his disciples ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ. This emphasis on being 'on the way' is particularly apparent immediately before and after the transfiguration. The dialogue beginning in Mark 8:27, which segues into the transfiguration through the bridging verse 9:1, is the first conversation to occur ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ. When Jesus and the three disciples descend from the mountain after the transfiguration, they resume their journey ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ (9:33). Moses' experience on Sinai in Exodus 24 is similarly bracketed by references to the Israelite's journey ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ. In Exodus 23:20, immediately preceding the events of chapter 24, God promises that his angel will accompany Israel ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ from Sinai to the promised land. When Moses descends the mountain to find Israel sinning with the golden calf, the punishment is that God will no longer travel with them ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ (Ex 33:3). When Israel finally break camp and leave Sinai for the promised land, they do so along the ὁδὸν shown them by the cloud of the Lord (Num 10:33).

How does this reading of the transfiguration as a second Sinai stand up to critique? Gundry is one of the most prominent dissenting voices. He argues that 'an allusion to Exodus rests on shaky ground' due to the several differences between Mark 9 and the Sinai theophanies, which include 'Moses' taking Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, seventy elders, and Joshua, […] versus Jesus' taking three companions; […] Moses' talking with God versus departed human beings' talking with Jesus; God's talking to Moses but not to Joshua or Moses' other

companions versus God's talking to Jesus' companions but not to Jesus himself; and the crowds subsequently running to Jesus versus Aaron's and the Israelites' fearing to approach Moses.'[146] This critique fails, however, to recognise the nature of Markan allusion. The transfiguration is not intended to be an explicit typological interpretation. The imagery of Sinai here is held loosely, borrowed only insofar as it facilities the construction of a new narrative. As Goppelt observed early in the twentieth century, this is typical of New Testament typology, which treats Old Testament redemptive history as both *true* and *temporary*.[147] Allusions to it are not therefore characterised by simple imitation or direct repetition but by a complex blend of continuity and escalation.[148]

France offers a more nuanced critique. Acknowledging that there are several echoes of Sinai in the narrative, he argues that they are simply 'part of Mark's inherited pattern of thought' and not 'a theme which he is particularly concerned to press on his readers'.[149] Elijah and not Moses, he argues, is the more prominent figure in the passage. It is true that Elijah is mentioned before (Mk 8:28), during (Mk 9:4, 5), and after (Mk 9:11, 12, 13) the transfiguration. Moses, by contrast, appears only on the mountaintop (Mk 9:4, 5). The frequency of Elijah's name does not immediately equate to significance, however. The reference to him beforehand comes in a string of popular misconceptions about the identity of Jesus and is quickly sidelined by Peter's correct understanding of Jesus as the Christ. The appearance of Elijah in the conversation after the transfiguration will be dealt with in more detail below, but suffice it to say at this point that Jesus is steering his disciples *away* from a

[146] Robert Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 475-6.
[147] Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: Die Typologische Deutung des Alten Testaments im Neuen* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Verlag, 1939), 244: 'Das NT würdigt sie als eine *wirklich*, ihrem Wortsinn nach von Gott stammende, aber eben *vorlaufende* Heilsgeschichte' (emphasis added).
[148] Ibid., 244: 'Jede Typologie wird durch typologische Entsprechung und Steigerung konstituiert'
[149] France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 353.

triumphalist focus on Elijah's return in the last days. The reference to 'Elijah with Moses' in verse 4 has sparked considerable debate as to why Elijah should be mentioned first. The reverse order of the next verse, however, where Moses is placed before Elijah, indicates that the structure of verse 4 is not intended as a sign of Elijah's prominence.[150] In addition to this, France's emphasis on Elijah rather than Moses rests on a false dichotomy. As was argued above, these are the only two figures to have met with God on Sinai, a fact which France himself recognises.[151] They therefore function in tandem, drawing the hearer back to the same Old Testament tradition of the mountain of God.

Best raises another objection to the above presentation of the transfiguration as a second Sinai. In keeping with his wider contention that 'the new exodus theme is not present' in Mark, he argues that 'the evidence for a Moses background is much clearer in Luke and Matthew than in Mark'.[152] Matthew ties the cloud to the glory of God's presence on Sinai with the phrase νεφέλη φωτεινή (Mt 17:5); Matthew and Luke both refer to Jesus' shining face (Mt 17:2; Lk 9:29) in an obvious link to Moses' radiant face in Exodus 34:29; and Luke even adds that the conversation on the mountaintop centred on Jesus' ἔξοδος to be accomplished in Jerusalem (Lk 9:31). Why is this language not present in Mark? It may simply be due to Mark's subtle use of the Old Testament, examined in the introduction to this thesis. It may, as Zeisler argues, reflect Luke's concern for the exodus backdrop to the

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[150] It may even be that Moses is presented as the primary figure in both constructions. John Heil defends this view with a survey of the preposition σὺν in Mark. He concludes that its idiomatic usage throughout the gospel carries the force of 'including even and especially'. In Heil's view, the best translation of Mark 9:4 is therefore: 'Then there appeared to them Elijah *with* (σὺν), that is, including even, Moses'. In other words, here is 'not only Elijah but even Moses! Hence Mark says basically the same as Matt 17:3 and Luke 9:30 […] but with slightly more emphasis upon Moses as *even more notable* than Elijah' (emphasis added). John Paul Heil, "A Note on 'Elijah with Moses' in Mark 9:4," *Biblica* 80 (1999), 115.

[151] France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 352: France admits that 'both [Moses and Elijah] were men of Sinai'.

[152] Ernest Best, *Disciples and Discipleship: Studies in the Gospel According to Mark* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), 218.

narrative not to be lost on ‘readers even more removed from Judaism than Mark’s’.[153] Perhaps the most helpful response is provided by Marcus. How, he asks, did Matthew and Luke both come to connect the transfiguration with Sinai? The most obvious source is Mark himself. Far from undermining the presence of the exodus motif in Mark 9, therefore, the variations in the parallel accounts suggest that both Matthew and Luke recognised ‘the Mosaic background of [Mark’s] story’ and ‘independently conformed’ their narrative accordingly.[154]

Given the strong evidence for viewing the transfiguration as the second Sinai, what is the role of Jesus in the narrative? *Pace* Swartley,[155] there are several indications that he is not presented here as a new Moses but as the God of Sinai. In Exodus 24:10, a select group from Israel meet with God and see ‘under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness.’ The use of light imagery, paired with a reminder that this is a heavenly vision, is echoed in Mark 9:3. Jesus’ clothing is ‘radiant, intensely white’, yet this is an otherworldly brightness that does not occur ‘on earth’. Connecting Jesus’ glory to his divine status, rather than to Moses’s shining face, is consistent with Jewish texts on effulgence. The vision of ‘The Ancient of Days’ in Daniel 7:9, for example, records that ‘his clothing was white as snow’.[156] The language is similar to Psalm 104:1-2: ‘you are clothed with splendour and majesty, covering yourself with light as with a garment’. Understanding Jesus as the divine presence on the mountain rather than as the new Moses could explain why Mark does not include a reference to the shining face of Jesus. As was seen above, Best uses

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[153] J. A. Ziesler, “The Transfiguration Story and Markan Soteriology,” *Expository Times* 81 (1970), 268.
[154] Joel Marcus, *Mark 8-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).
[155] Willard Swartley, “The Structural Function of the Way (Hodos) in Mark's Gospel” in *The New Way of Jesus*, ed. W. Klassen (Topeka: Faith and Life Press, 1980), 80.
[156] Lucas Ernst, *Daniel* (Leicester: Apollos, 2002), 182: Lucas argues that ‘the idea of brightness and splendour’ as a mark of divinity finds its clearest New Testament expression in the transfiguration in Mark 9.

this omission to argue against a link to Sinai. Perhaps, however, the reverse is true. In the Sinai theophany in Exodus 33, Moses is told by God ‘You cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live’ (Ex 33:20) and is reminded again in verse 23 that ‘my face shall not be seen.’ This same theme emerges clearly in the theophany in 1 Enoch 14, where Enoch ascends to heaven and progresses into the divine throne room. He sees ‘a lofty throne: its appearance was like the *crystals* of ice […] and from underneath the throne came forth streams of *blazing fire*’ (1 En 14:18-19).[157] The language is strikingly similar to Exodus 24, where Moses and the elders of Israel see a ‘pavement of *sapphire* stone’ (Ex 24:10) under the feet of God and the glory of the Lord appears ‘like a devouring *fire* on the top of the mountain’ (Ex 24:17). Although Enoch can see God’s throne, when he lifts his eyes to the one seated on the throne his sight fails: ‘I was unable to look on it. And the glory of the Great One sat thereon [i.e., the throne], and his raiment was brighter than the sun, and whiter than any snow. And no angel was able to enter this house, *or to look on his face,* by reason of its splendour and glory; and *no flesh was able to look on him*’ (1 En 14:19-21).[158] Here, comments Nickelsburg, are the two ‘typical components of theophanic descriptions’: the ‘effulgent splendour that envelops God’ and the repeated emphasis on being unable to see God’s face that ‘documents the final chasm between God and mortals, and, indeed, angels’.[159] Both of these components are present in Mark 9. As Jesus is transfigured, both the description

[157] Matthew Black, *The Book of Enoch* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 33.
[158] Ibid.,
[159] George Nickelsburg, *A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 259-64.

of his radiant garments and the *lack* of any description of his face signal his deity, a fact further reinforced by the Father's affirmation that this is his Beloved Son (Mk 9:7).[160]

<u>"Listen to Him!": An Unexpected Command</u>

How does this 'Second Sinai' function within Mark's gospel more widely? Watts gives voice to a widespread view of this passage, describing it as one of a few 'isolated events and motifs which to varying degrees seem deliberately to echo Exodus categories'.[161] Is it simply an 'isolated event', however? The similarity between the transfiguration and the prologue suggests that this passage is a key moment in Mark, the start of a new section after the dawn of the new exodus in the opening chapters. Transfiguration and prologue are the only two passages in the gospel where God's voice is heard from heaven, on both occasions expressing approval of the Son. Both passages are also replete with exodus imagery. As was demonstrated in the previous two chapters, the composite citation from Exodus 23:20 and Isaiah 40:1 ties the prologue to the exodus motif, a link which is reinforced by the setting of wilderness and Jordan river permeating the following verses. Transfiguration and prologue are also connected by references to the kingdom of God. Jesus' preaching in Mark 1:15 that

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[160] This reading of Jesus as a *divine* and not simply a *Mosaic* figure in the transfiguration is consistent with the work of Yarbro Collins and Litwa on the Hellenistic features of this theophany. Both argue that the description of Jesus in Mark 9 is designed to evoke Greco-Roman theophanies. It is therefore an unveiling not only of *glory* but of *deity*. In *The Odyssey* 16.182-5 (LCL), for example Odysseus's changed clothes and skin cause Telemachus to conclude: "surely you are *some god* who rules the vaulting skies" (emphasis added) and to offer "gifts of hammered gold" to appease this unknown deity. Further evidence comes in *The Homeric Hymn for Apollo* 202-3, where 'gleamings' (μαρμαρυγαί) radiate from the god's garments. Likewise in *The Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite,* in which the goddess is described as wearing "glittering garments" (εἵματα σιγαλόεντα), and as clothing herself with a robe brighter than a ray of fire (πέπλον . . . φαεινότερον πυρὸς αὐγῆς). (Cf. Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007) and David Litwa, "Light Was That Godhead: Transfiguration as Epiphany" in *Iesus Deus,* ed. David Litwa (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014).) There are dissenting voices against linking Mark 9 to Hellenistic theophanies, however. Cranfield is one such voice, who argues that 'the background […] here is not to be sought in pagan ideas of metamorphosis but in Jewish apocalyptic': C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to St Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 290.

[161] Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus*, 49.

‘the kingdom of God has come near’ mirrors the prophecy in Mark 9:1, which leads into the transfiguration, that some of the bystanders will ‘see that the kingdom of God has come with power’. Both texts use specific time references to anchor the events in sacred history, with the ‘forty days’ in Mark 1:13 and the ‘six days’ in Mark 9:2. Prologue and transfiguration are the only passages so far in the gospel where the curtain is drawn back and the deity of Jesus made explicit, whether in his title as Son of God (Mk 1:1) or his divine radiance (Mk 9:3). A number of semantic shifts from Mark 9 onwards, which will be examined in the next chapter, also suggest that the transfiguration, just like the prologue, marks the start of a new section within the gospel. Not only this, but the transfiguration is located almost at the exact centre of the gospel. Scott, working with the R.V.G. Tasker Greek New Testament, counts 5,393 words before the transfiguration and 5,447 after it until the short ending of Mark, meaning that ‘the pericope is 27 words off centre or approximately one-fifth of one percent of the whole.’ Although Scott proceeds to extrapolate too much from this placement, it does suggest that the transfiguration, like the prologue, marks the start of a section in the gospel.

This narrative progression from prologue to transfiguration mirrors the trajectory of the exodus outlined above. It was argued in the first two chapters of this thesis that the prologue signals the start of a new exodus. Exodus promises are recalled, the wilderness once again becomes the site of divine blessing and the covenant people stream from their cities to return to the Jordan as redemptive history is replayed. The transfiguration is further along this same exodus journey. It is anchored in Sinai. The line from prologue to transfiguration therefore reflects the progression from Red Sea to Sinai.

Far from being an isolated event in the gospel, the transfiguration therefore functions as a recapitulated prologue, continuing the same exodus motif and carrying it further forward:

First exodus	
Exodus Deliverance	Presence of God on Sinai
Prologue	**Transfiguration**
Exodus Deliverance	Presence of God on Sinai

Given that prologue and transfiguration progress through the first stages of the exodus, what might be the presumed next step? As was outlined above, Moses is instructed to build a tent, a tabernacle which to encapsulate and preserve the mountain experience. Only a very limited group experienced God's presence on the mountain, but through the tabernacle this presence was brought down to the people and located in their midst:

First exodus		
Exodus Deliverance	Presence of God on Sinai	Mountain Theophany Prolonged in the Tabernacle (σκηνή)

Few verses in the transfiguration are as hotly debated as Mark 9:5, Peter's suggestion to construct tents for Jesus, Moses and Elijah. Links have been perceived to the feast of tabernacles,[162] to heavenly tents awaiting righteous Jews at death[163] and to booths erected at cultic epiphany festivals[164] - to name but a few. Yet could the threefold exodus pattern outlined above shed light on Peter's suggestion? Despite the fear he feels in the divine presence, one thing is clear: 'Rabbi, it is good that we are here' (Mk 9:5). His first thought is to capture the moment, to preserve this taste of heaven - by constructing three tents. It is

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[162] Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 638; Morna Hooker, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: A & C Black, 1991), 217.
[163] Markus Öhler, "Die Verklärung (MK 9:1-8): Die Ankunft der Herrschaft Gottes auf der Erde," *NovT* 38:3 (1996), 209.
[164] Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 424.

significant that Peter does not want a tent for himself or the other disciples. He understands that he is a spectator, an outsider, a fact which goes against attempts to link his suggestion to cultic festivals or heavenly tents of the righteous. Contrary to all these suggestions, Peter is not trying to *join* the heavenly scene but to *prolong* it. Why three tents? Gundry argues that the plurality rules out any parallel with the single tent that Moses was commanded to construct.[165] Once again, however, this fails to take into account the nature of Mark's allusion, which is not intended as an exact replica of the Old Testament narrative. In addition to this, the difference between Peter's suggestion and the tabernacle are not as striking as Gundry makes out. The tabernacle was a tripartite tent. Only one third of it, the holy of holies, contained the divine presence seen on the summit of the mountain. The surrounding two sections, holy place and outer court, were reserved for the priests who attended on this divine presence. Peter's suggestion to construct three tents is not inconsistent with this model: he wishes to prolong not only the glorious presence of Jesus but also that of his heavenly attendants. Note how this proposed next step follows the contours of the first exodus:[166]

First exodus		
Exodus Deliverance	Presence of God on Sinai	Mountain Theophany Prolonged in the Tabernacle (σκηνή)
Peter's Suggestion		
Exodus deliverance	Presence of God on Sinai	*Mountain Theophany Prolonged in Tents* (σκηναί)

[165] Gundry, *Apology for the Cross,* 476.
[166] The exodus background to Peter's suggestion may be why Mark expresses editorial disapproval for this plan in verse 6. It may not be immediately obvious to the reader that he is in error, for this would be precisely the expected turn of events.

As God's voice rings out from the cloud at the second Sinai, however, there is no command to build a tent. There is no affirmation of Peter's suggestion. There is no indication that this epiphany will be prolonged or architecturally preserved. The precise opposite occurs. The Father approves the teaching of the Son, seen in 8:31, that it is necessary for the Son of man first *to suffer many things*. Far from being prolonged, this heavenly scene is fleeting and suddenly (ἐξάπινα) disappears. As will be seen in the next chapter, Jesus has now embarked 'on the way' that will lead him directly to the cross. It is here, at the cross, that the glory of the mountain summit will not be *preserved* but *inverted.* Divine light will be replaced by divine darkness; brilliant clothing will be exchanged for nakedness; Elijah's presence will be exchanged for mocking crowds who wait in vain for Elijah to appear; the Father's affirmation of the Son will turn into forsakenness by God; Peter's desire to prolong the moment will be replaced by betrayal and desertion.[167] This is the path the new exodus must take:

First exodus		
Exodus Deliverance	Presence of God on Sinai	Mountain Theophany Prolonged in the Tabernacle (σκηνή)
Jesus' Mission		
Exodus deliverance	Presence of God on Sinai	Mountain Theophany *Inverted* at the Cross

The introduction of suffering may diverge from the first exodus, but Mark is at pains to show that it does not diverge from the divine will. Jesus describes his suffering in 8:31 as necessary (δεῖ). Peter's attempts to correct him in favour of a more exalted path are dismissed in the strongest terms as satanic (Mk 8:33). The Father's affirmation of his love for the Son and command to 'listen to him' in Mark 9:7 reinforce the message that the path of suffering is precisely the will of God. Jesus reinforces this fact in the conversation on the way down from

[167] I am indebted to Marcus for first seeing the passion as an anti-transfiguration: Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 640.

the mountain: 'it is written of the Son of man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt' (Mk 9:12).

Eschatological Elijah and the Inverted Exodus

The narrative context supports this reading of the transfiguration as an inversion of the exodus pattern. The next chapter will focus on 'the way' motif in the surrounding section, Mark 8:27-10:52. Here it will be argued that the gospel's central chapters revolve around an inversion of the exodus 'way', a variation which ends not in the triumphant conquest of the promised land but Jesus' suffering on the cross. In addition to this, the dialogue immediately after the transfiguration in Mark 9:9-13 seems to contain a similar redefinition of a familiar biblical motif: *Malachi's eschatological Elijah*. As Jesus descends the mountain, he commands Peter, James and John 'to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of man had risen from the dead' (Mk 9:9). This mention of rising from the dead confuses the disciples, prompting them to a question about eschatology: 'Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?' (Mk 9:10). In other words, if this rising from the dead, an eschatological event, is imminent, why have we not yet seen Elijah? Did not the scribes teach that he must come before the end?[168] The first part of Jesus' answer in verse 12 has prompted considerable debate: Ἠλίας μὲν ἐλθὼν πρῶτον ἀποκαθιστάνει πάντα. Virtually all English translations understand this as Jesus' affirmation of the scribal position. The ESV provides a typical rendering: 'Elijah does come first to restore all things'. A number of factors suggest an alternative translation, however. First, it would be unusual for the Markan Jesus to agree with the position of the scribes. Of the 21 references to the scribes in Mark, all except one portray

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[168] This question is a further factor that speaks against France's reading that Elijah, not Moses, is the dominant Old Testament figure in the transfiguration (see above for a summary of France's position). In the disciples' minds, Elijah has not yet come to fulfil his eschatological role.

the scribes either as the agents of Jesus' suffering and death or as rival (and inferior) interpreters of the law to Jesus.[169] When the disciples come with a question about scribal teaching, the reader is therefore primed to expect a confrontation with Jesus' own teaching. Second, the dialogue is couched within a wider cycle of misunderstandings about Jesus (and the latter days in general) that need to be corrected. A threefold cycle, examined in more detail in the next chapter, characterises this section of the gospel. Divine revelation (8:27-31; 9:2-4; 10:33-34) is followed by misunderstanding (8:32; 9:5-6; 10:35-39a), which is followed by further enlightenment through teaching (8:34-9:1; 9:7; 10:39b-40). It would be unsurprising to find this same pattern in the current dialogue: divine revelation about resurrection (9:9) followed by scribal misunderstandings about the end times (9:11) and then further enlightenment through teaching (9:12-13). Third, there is evidence that Malachi's prophecy about the eschatological Elijah had morphed in popular Jewish understanding into a much more triumphalist vision of the future. Malachi 4:5-6 states: 'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And he will restore (ἀποκαταστήσει) the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers.' Ben Sira 48:10 illustrates how this verse had come to be understood in Second Temple Judaism. It states of Elijah: 'You are destined, it is written, in time to come to put an end to wrath before the day of the Lord, to turn back the hearts of parents toward their children, and to restore (καταστῆσαι) the tribes of Israel.'[170] Note how the promise in Malachi of *family* restoration has grown into an expectation of *national* restoration. Justin Martyr's 2nd-century *Dialogue with Trypho* presents a similarly exalted picture of Elijah's eschatological role. Admittedly, this text's presentation of Judaism comes from the hand of a

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[169] The only exception is the single scribe in Mark 12:32 who agrees with Jesus' teaching on the greatest commandments and is described as being not far from God's kingdom.

[170] Quotations here and elsewhere from *Ben Sira* are from the New American Bible (Revised Edition).

Christian author. The work's apologetic effectiveness, however, rests on a credible depiction of Justin's Jewish contemporaries. To quote Trakatellis, if Trypho had been merely an exaggerated trope, 'the readers of the *Dialogue*, no matter who they were, would have discarded the document out of hand as unacceptable fiction.'[171] Trypho's vision of the eschatological Elijah parallels the expectations of Ben Sira: 'But Christ—if He has indeed been born, and exists anywhere—is unknown, and does not even know Himself, and has no power until Elijah comes to anoint Him *and make Him manifest to all*' (Emphasis added. *Dialogue* 8).[172] Here, it would seem, the national role of Elijah anticipated in Ben Sira has further morphed into a universal role.

Given these three factors, I believe that Jesus is not confirming but questioning the scribal view of Elijah.[173] Consider the following translation:

Mark 9:11	καὶ ἐπηρώτων αὐτὸν λέγοντες Ὅτι λέγουσιν οἱ γραμματεῖς ὅτι Ἠλίαν δεῖ ἐλθεῖν πρῶτον;	And they asked him, "Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come first?"	*Disciples' question*
Mark 9:12a	ὁ δὲ ἔφη αὐτοῖς · Ἠλίας μὲν ἐλθὼν πρῶτον ἀποκαθιστάνει πάντα	And he said to them, "[They say] that when Elijah comes first, he will restore all things."	*Jesus' summary of scribal teaching*
Mark 9:12b	καὶ πῶς γέγραπται ἐπὶ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἵνα πολλὰ πάθῃ καὶ ἐξουδενηθῇ;	"But how is then it written of the Son of man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt?"	*Conflict between triumphant scribal expectations and Old Testament teaching on suffering*

[171] Demetrios Trakatellis, "Justin Martyr's Trypho," *HTR* 79 (1986), 297.
[172] Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol 1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996), 199.
[173] The textual variant in Codex Bezae, which inserts εἰ to read verse 12a as a question, indicates that at least some early readers had a similar understanding of this difficult construction. The interrogative pronoun in this variant reading serves to cast doubt on the scribal teaching that the disciples have received.

Mark 9:13	ἀλλὰ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι καὶ Ἠλίας ἐλήλυθεν, καὶ ἐποίησαν αὐτῷ ὅσα ἤθελον, καθὼς γέγραπται ἐπ’ αὐτόν.	“I tell you instead that Elijah has already come and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him.”	*Jesus corrects the scribes’ misunderstanding with a different portrayal of the eschatological Elijah*

As Gundry notes, the μὲν […] καὶ combination in verse 12 functions as a semitic parallel to μὲν […] δὲ.[174] This creates a tension between scribal expectations (the restoration of all things) and the role of suffering in the divine plan. This tension is resolved by Jesus with the authoritative ἀλλὰ λέγω in verse 13.[175] Jesus confirms that Malachi’s prophecy has been fulfilled by the Baptist (“Elijah has already come”), yet he steers the disciples away the exalted eschatology that had emerged from this prophecy. Just like the transfiguration itself, a scriptural pattern is both *confirmed* and *inverted*, imbued with an unexpected and sobering new significance.[176] It is through suffering, not national restoration, that the eschatological Elijah has prepared the way of the Lord.[177] In this way, the immediate context of the mountaintop theophany reminds the reader that a familiar Old Testament motif is being imbued with a new and surprising meaning.

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[174] Gundry, *Apology for the Cross*, 464. Gundry recognises this semitic parallel but comes to a different conclusion, positing that Jesus here agrees with the scribal expectation of Elijah restoring all things. According to Gundry, Jesus is only denying that this restoration will occur before his passion.

[175] Note the parallel situation in Mark 12:35-37: ‘And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, “How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared, “‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.”’ David himself calls him Lord. So how is he his son?”’ Once again, Jesus identifies a tension between the scribal emphasis on the Davidic line and the scriptural teaching on the divinity of the Messiah. Unlike Mark 9:11-13, however, Jesus does not resolve this tension.

[176] Just like the inverted Sinai motif on the mountaintop, this new significance does not diverge from the divine will, as indicated by the καθὼς γέγραπται in verse 13. This may be a reference to 1 Kings 19, where Elijah’s ‘bold confrontations with Ahab and Jezebel prefigure John's open challenge to Antipas and Herodias; the difference is that Herodias will succeed where Jezebel failed’ (France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 359.). It may simply be referring to the scriptural motif of suffering prophet, a motif that is picked up again in the parable of the vineyard in Mark 12 (cf. Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 432.).

[177] This is also relevant to the argument in this dissertation's first chapter, which questioned the widespread emphasis on Malachi in the opening citation. Mark 9:11-13 is frequently cited as confirmation that Malachi is central to Mark’s opening portrayal of the Baptist. As has been shown above, however, Mark is guiding the hearer away from the Malachi tradition in these verses.

Conclusion

The introduction of this dissertation compared Mark to a piece of music, a complex variation on a familiar theme. The transfiguration marks the start of a new section in this composition. The exodus theme rings out from the summit in Mark 9, but it has been transposed into a minor key. The glory of God has reappeared on the new Sinai, yet this glory will not be preserved in a new tabernacle. It will be abandoned on the cross. Even here, however, there is a hint that this glory will return one day. In Mark 9:1, the promise is given that some of the bystanders will live long enough to see 'the vindication of Jesus' in the coming of his kingdom.[178] Even Jesus' warning in Mark 9:9 that no one should know about the transfiguration is the only secrecy command in Mark to come with an expiry date. A day is coming when his mountaintop glory will be revealed to all.

[178] This verse has prompted considerable debate. Hooker makes the apt observation that much of the discussion over the precise fulfilment of this promise is anachronistic. Whilst modern commentators draw sharp lines between the resurrection, outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost and Christ's parousia, from Mark's perspective these are all simply diverse 'aspects of the vindication of Jesus' (Hooker, *Mark*, 215.)

Chapter 4: An Inverted Exodus Journey Along 'The Way'

In the transfiguration, the exodus motif is no longer simply revisited but inverted. That was the contention of the previous chapter. This minor transposition of the age-old melody, it was argued, marks the start of a new section in Mark's gospel. It is on this new section that this chapter will focus, proposing that 'the way' from Galilee to Jerusalem in Mark 8:27-10:52, just like the transfiguration, similarly inverts the exodus motif.

Throughout Mark's reception history there has been considerable debate about the gospel's structure - or lack of it. This chapter will therefore open with an argument that Mark 8:27-10:52 forms a pivotal central section, bearing several marks of careful structuring. This will form the basis for the chapter's second contention, that the defining feature of this section is the term ὁδός. This 'way' that Jesus embarks will then form the final focus of this chapter. This journeying terminology, it will be argued, clearly recalls the first exodus. This time, however, the journey will not end in triumph but torment. Its goal is not the land of promise but a cross in Jerusalem.

Mark 8:27-10:52: A Carefully Structured Section?

In the earliest extant comments on the gospel, Papias writes that Mark had 'no intention of giving a connected account [οὐχ ὥσπερ σύνταξιν] of the Lord's discourses.' As a written record of Peter's preaching, this gospel portrays the life of Jesus 'accurately, though not in order [οὐ μέντοι τάξει]'.[179] Centuries later, form critics such as Wrede and Schmidt argued in a similar vein that individual units, not overarching structures, are the defining feature of Mark's style. This is a gospel, in their view, where pericopes have simply been

[179] Quoted by Eusebius in *Historia Ecclesiastica* iii.39.15 (own translation).

lined up like beads on a string. To quote Schmidt, Mark's use of traditional material is characterised primarily by 'Un-Zusammenhang'.[180] In the 21st century, Gundry has painted a similar portrait of Mark as a 'loose disposition of materials […] not a diptych or a triptych or any other carefully segmented portrayal of Jesus'.[181]

It is true, as Bultmann notes, that Mark reads very differently to the tightly structured gospel of Luke.[182] It is true that Mark is hardly the 'meticulous architecton' that Scott wants him to be in his reading of the gospel as a neat eleven-fold chiasm.[183] Is there, however, a danger of overstating the case? A simple or subtle structure does not equate to no structure at all. Mark may read like beads threaded on a string, but as Hooker wryly observes, 'might those beads perhaps have been arranged in a deliberate order?'[184] The section will argue that Mark 8:27-10:52 show clear signs of just such a deliberate order. There are four main indications that these verses form a coherent bridging section within Mark.

The first indication, to use Swartley's terminology, is a 'triple threefold cycle'.[185] There is a narrative triad that occurs at the beginning, middle, and end of this unit (8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34). Each time it begins with a passion prediction, moves to a negative response from the disciples, and closes with Jesus teaching on messiahship and discipleship:

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[180] Karl Ludwig Schmidt, *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu. Literarkritische Untersuchungen zur ältesten Jesusüberlieferung* (Berlin: Trowitzsch Verlag, 1919), 5.
[181] Robert Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004),1048-49.
[182] Rudolf Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1933[2]), 362.
[183] Philip M. Scott, "Chiastic Structure: A Key to the Interpretation of Mark's Gospel," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 15 (1985), 17–26.
[184] Morna Hooker, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: A & C Black, 1991), 10.
[185] Willard Swartley, "Structure of the Gospel of Mark," Ph.D. diss. (Princeton Theological Seminary, 1973), 65.

	Mark 8:31-38	Mark 9:31-37	Mark 10:33-45
Passion Prediction	And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.	He taught his disciples and said to them, "The Son of man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And after he is killed, he will rise the third day."	He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to him.
Disciples Fail to Understand	Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.	They did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask him.	[James and John] said to him, "Grant us that we may sit, one on your right hand and the other on your left, in your glory."
Jesus Corrects the Misunderstanding	He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it"	He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."	"Whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Connected with these three triads is an emphasis on discipleship that characterises this central section. This is seen in the *recipients,* the *content* and the *nature* of Jesus' teaching. Across the opening eight chapters, Jesus interacts primarily with crowds. Frequent references are made to the 'many', the 'great multitude', or the 'very large crowd' that throngs Jesus (e.g., Mk 1:32; 2:2; 3:8, 20; 4:1; 5:21; 6:33, 56; 7:14; 8:1). This emphasis on the public nature of Jesus' ministry fades into the background, however, from Mark 8:27 onwards. Throughout these central chapters Jesus interacts primarily with his core group of disciples. Each of the three passion predictions noted above, for example, is spoken exclusively to the

disciples. More than this, there seems to be a deliberate withholding of this information from wider crowds. Mark 9:30-31, for example, records that 'they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and [Jesus] *did not want anyone to know it*. For He taught His disciples and said to them, "The Son of man is being betrayed into the hands of men…".'[186] Gundry correctly observes that there are exceptions to this shift from a public to a private setting.[187] Larger groups occasionally appear within these central chapters (Mk 8:34-9:1; 9:14-27; 10:1-9). In addition, examples of private teaching can be found outside of this section (Mk 4:10-20; 7:17-23; 8:13-21; 11:20-25; 12:41-44; 13:1-37; 14:3-9, 12-31). His conclusion, however, that Mark 8:27-10:52 therefore 'does not prove itself distinctive' fails to recognise the general shift from public to private teaching in these chapters. More than that, Gundry does not factor in the changed *nature* of Jesus' teaching that accompanies this narrowed focus on the Twelve. Through word and deed, Jesus has demonstrated himself to be the Messiah in the opening chapters - a demonstration which climaxed in Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi. He now unveils what this Messiahship entails, both for him and his disciples. The intricate connection between teacher and follower that emerges here was already implicit in the calling of the Twelve in Mark 3. The disciples were there set apart 'in order that they might be with [Jesus] and in order that he might send them out to preach and have power to heal sicknesses and cast out demons' (Mk 3:14-15).[188] Having first spent time in Jesus' presence, the disciples are then to go and carry out precisely the three duties that characterised Jesus' own early ministry: preaching (Mk 1:45), healing (Mk 1:31-33, 42) and

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[186] See also the warning in Mark 8:30 that Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ should not be shared with anyone outside the Twelve, and the command in Mark 9:9 that the glory on the mount of transfiguration must not be revealed until after Jesus' 'rising from the dead'.
[187] Gundry, *Apology for the* Cross, 440.
[188] Although the editors of NA28 have chosen to omit the phrase θεραπεύειν τὰς νόσους, its early occurrence in a number of fourth- to fifth-century Uncials, including Alexandrinus and Ephraemi Rescriptus; its occurrence in miniscules f^1 and f^{13}; and its geographical popularity as seen in syriac Harklensis, the entire Latin tradition, and the Majority text, are all strong reasons to include it here.

exorcising (Mk 1:34, 39). It is not until the central chapters, however, that the link between Jesus and the Twelve becomes explicit. All three triads above open with a passion prediction and end with an application of this prediction to the lives of the Twelve. They, like Jesus, are to deny themselves and take up their cross (Mk 8:34). They, like Jesus, are to aspire to greatness by taking up the position of a servant (Mk 9:35). They, like Jesus, are to rule as though slaves of all (Mk 10:44). Teaching about discipleship also extends beyond these three triads. In chapters eight to ten alone Jesus instructs the Twelve directly on the attitude they should have towards fellow believers (Mk 9:38-50), marriage (Mk 10:10-12), children (Mk 10:13-16), and wealth (Mk 10:23-31). The emphasis on discipleship even pervades the few healings in this section. As will be seen below, the opening healing of the blind man physically portrays the disciples' need for spiritual sight. The exorcism in Mark 9:14-29 likewise ties explicitly into the theme of discipleship. Just like the healing in Bethsaida, observes France, this miracle becomes 'an object lesson on discipleship and faith'. The dialogue between Jesus and the Twelve that follows the miracle shows that 'the focus is now not on the impression made on the crowd but on the lesson which [the exorcism] taught the disciples. It thus belongs appropriately with the verbal teaching which predominates in Act Two'.[189] This shift in recipients and content is even accompanied by a change in the *nature* of Jesus' teaching. In keeping with with the increased focus on discipleship, Quesnell identifies a wholesale shift in Jesus' teaching from the indicative to the imperative mood. Whereas the preceding eight chapters contain only two 'universal moral directives' (Quesnell's term for a range of imperatival constructions), Mark 8:27-10:52 contains 23 such directives.[190] Even the composition of the narrative reflects this shift towards direct teaching, as 59% of the text

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[189] R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 361.
[190] Quentin Quesnell, *The Mind of Mark: Interpretation and Method through the Exegesis of Mark 6:52* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969), 134-136.

between Mark 8:27 and 10:52 is taken up with the words of Jesus, compared to 46% of the gospel as a whole.[191]

A third aspect of these central chapters are the twin healings of the blind man in Bethsaida (Mk 8:22-25) and blind Bartimaeus (Mk 10:46-52), deemed by Marcus to be this section's 'most striking structural feature'.[192]. The opening chapters of Mark contain an outburst of miraculous healings, ranging from healing fevers to exorcisms and raising the dead. From Mark 8:22 to the end of the gospel, however, only three more healings are recorded. Two of these are the blind men mentioned above. Not only are these the final miraculous healings in the gospel, they are also the *only* healings of blind men in Mark. Both Matthew (Mt 15:29-31; 21:14) and Luke (Lk 7:18-23) portray healings of the blind as frequent occurrences in Jesus' ministry, yet Mark restricts any mention of the blind to these two passages. These two healings function as brackets for this central section. As was hinted above, the opening restoration of sight in Bethsaida foreshadows the disciples' slow growth in spiritual understanding that characterises these chapters. This is the only miracle in all the gospels to occur in two stages. When Jesus first spits on the blind man's eyes, he receives only partial sight, seeing 'men like trees, walking' (Mk 8:23). Only after Jesus places his hands on the man's eyes does he finally see 'everyone clearly' (Mk 8:25). The healing is tied to the disciples' condition by the preceding pericope, where the language of blindness and sight describes their lack of spiritual perception. Jesus chides the disciples for 'not yet perceiving or understanding' and asks the poignant question 'Having eyes, *do you not see*?' (Mk 8:17-18). Like the partially healed man at Bethsaida, they have come to understand that Jesus is the Christ although they do not yet grasp what that entails. In each of the three

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[191] Quesnell, *The Mind of Mark*, 129.
[192] Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2005), 63.

triads mentioned above, their repeated response to his upcoming death is either denial or confusion. It is fitting that this section of focussed teaching should therefore close with the healing of blind Bartimaeus, promissory of the full spiritual sight that the disciples will one day acquire. This healing provides not only structural bracketing but, as Swartley notes, christological bracketing.[193] Peter's declaration at the outset of this section that Jesus is 'the Christ' (Mk 8:29) is echoed by Bartimaeus' designation of Jesus as the 'Son of David' (Mk 10:47-48), thus neatly rounding off the section. The healings of the two blind men also demonstrate, *pace* Swartley, that there is not a sharp division between these central chapters and the surrounding gospel. Mark 8:27-10:52 is a coherent but not discrete section. In their bracketing function, both healings look forwards and backwards, signalling both continuity and progression. The first healing belongs geographically to the preceding Galilean ministry but thematically to the ensuing emphasis on discipleship. The healing of Bartimaeus uses the language of 'the way' from the central chapters but also opens the gospel's final section in Jerusalem. As Hooker comments, this use of 'overlapping hinges' is consonant with a work written for an oral context, designed to the help the hearer better follow the narrative flow.[194] The definition of the central section as stretching from Mark 8:27, after the first healing, to Mark 10:52, after the second healing, should therefore be understood in the light of these gradated transitions.

A fourth and final distinctive feature of these chapters is the semantic shift from the preceding narrative. There is a marked increase in references to the 'kingdom of God'. This kingdom is heralded once in the opening chapter (Mk 1:15) and appears three times in the kingdom parables of chapter four (Mk 4:11, 26, 30), but beyond that it is not explained

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[193] Swartley, "Structure of the Gospel of Mark", 73.
[194] Hooker. *The Gospel According to Mark*, 16.

further before chapter 8. This changes in the brief middle section with its seven distinct references to the kingdom of God. In tandem with the increased emphasis on discipleship, all of these references focus on entrance into this kingdom (Mk 9:1, 47; 10:14, 15, 23, 24, 25). Interestingly, references to the kingdom seem to fade away after this central section, occurring only three times in the final chapters (Mk 12:34; 14:25; 15:43). The title 'Son of man' also occurs far more frequently in this section than elsewhere. Only twice in the opening chapters does Jesus use this title of himself (Mk 2:10, 28). From 8:27-10:52, however, it occurs a total of seven times (Mk 8:31, 38; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45). This likely mirrors the unveiling of Jesus' destiny on the cross, a christological title that better anticipates his humiliation than the exalted 'Christ' on the lips of the disciples. 'The Way' (ὁδός) is a third term that similarly moves to the foreground in this central section. Used in the opening chapters in various ways, from the path in the parable of the sower to the journey the famished listeners of Jesus must take home, there is an intensified use of the phrase ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ between 8:27 and 10:52. Occurring five times (Mk 8:27; 9:33, 34; 10:32, 52), and complemented by occurrences of εἰς ὁδὸν (Mk 10:17) and παρὰ τὴν ὁδόν (Mk 10:46), it frequently reminds the reader that Jesus and his disciples have now embarked on a journey.

The combined weight of these four features strongly suggests, *pace* Gundry, that Mark 8:27-10:52 forms a carefully structured, coherent section within the gospel.[195] This is a unit shaped by three passion triads, marked by a new emphasis on discipleship, bracketed by two blind healings, and set apart from preceding material by a semantic shift. Widespread scholarly opinion confirms this conclusion. In a survey of 61 suggested structures for the gospel of Mark, Watts notes that 45 identify a break after the first healing of the blind man in

[195] Gundry, *Apology for the* Cross, 440-42: Gundry presents an extended argument that Mark 8:27-10:52 does not form a distinctive section in the gospel. Several of his contentions go beyond the scope of this chapter and cannot be answered directly here. A full rebuttal of Gundry's position can be found in: Rikki Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 130ff.

Bethsaida (Mk 8:27) and 50 agree there is another division after the second healing of Bartimaeus (Mk 10:52).[196]

The Significance of 'The Way'

Of the several distinctive aspects highlighted above, which is the most significant for this central section? It may seem surprising to claim that it is the term ὁδός, a very common word, which occurs over 100 times in the New Testament alone. Even within Mark this term occurs more frequently *outside* these central chapters than within them. So how can it constitute the defining feature of Mark 8:27-10:52? Three striking points emerge when the occurrences of the term in this section are examined in detail:

ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ		
Mark 8:27	And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way [ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ] he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?"	First passion prediction / start of central section
Mark 9:33	And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way [ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ]?"	Second passion prediction
Mark 9:34	They kept silent, for on the way [ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ] they had argued with one another about who was the greatest.	Second passion prediction
Mark 10:32	And they were on the way [ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ], going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were	Third passion prediction
Mark 10:52	And Jesus said to [Bartimaeus], "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way [ἐν	End of central section

[196] Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus,* 124.

εἰς ὁδὸν / παρὰ τὴν ὁδόν		
Mark 10:17	And as he was setting out along the way [εἰς ὁδὸν], a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal	Rich young ruler
Mark 10:46	And they came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the way [παρὰ τὴν ὁδόν].	Blind Bartimaeus

First and most obviously, ὁδός occurs at key structural points in this section. It was noted above that Mark 8:27-10:52 revolves around three triads of passion prediction, misunderstanding, and clarifying teaching. Mark makes clear in each of these three structural points that Jesus and his disciples were ‘on the way’ (Mk 8:27; 9:33, 34; 10:32). Not only this, but ὁδός brackets the entire section. The opening verse of this central section, immediately after the healing of the blind man in Bethsaida, contains Jesus’ journey towards Caesarea Philippi and the dialogue between Jesus and his disciples ‘on the way’ (8:27). As the section closes with the healing of blind Bartimaeus, the final verse records that he, having received his sight, followed Jesus 'on the way’ (10:52). It is striking that the Greek syntax here has been arranged so that ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ is the final phrase in the final clause. Swartley summarises the structural prominence of this term:

> The ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ phrase is structurally related to each of the other features of structural distinctiveness: […] to the threefold predictions (8:31; 9:31; 10:32), to the teaching on discipleship (all), and to the teaching on messiahship (especially 8:27; 10:46, and 52). ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ is thus *the structural key or frame which encompasses the entire section* and integrates, as it were, the other features of structural distinctiveness. (Emphasis added).[197]

[197] Swartley, “Structure of Mark”, 78.

Second, the use of ὁδός in these central chapters is a distinctively Markan feature. Of the five occurrences of ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ in this section, none can be found in Luke, and only one is retained by Matthew (Mt 20:17). This is all the more striking given that Matthew and Luke replicate almost every detail of Mark's three passion predictions. Note the overlap between Mark and Matthew in Mark's first passion prediction, for example. The key features of the Markan narrative, with the notable exception of the phrase ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ, are all preserved by Matthew:

Mark 8:27-30	Matthew 16:13-20
And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way [ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ] he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.	Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." […] Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

'The way' emerges once more within Mark's second passion triad as the disciples fail to understand the implications of Jesus' servant leadership for their own lives. Once again, the phrase does not occur in either parallel synoptic account despite their evident use of the Markan material. Note the similarities with Luke 9, for example:

Mark 9:33-34	Luke 9:33-37
[Jesus] asked them, “What were you discussing on the way [ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ]?” But they kept silent, for on the way [ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ] they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. […] And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.”	An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest. But Jesus, knowing the reasoning of their hearts, took a child and put him by his side and said to them, “Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.”

The same phenomenon reappears in the third passion predication. Luke 18 contains all the features of Mark 10, from the journeying language towards Jerusalem to the details of the passion and timing of the resurrection. Once again, however, the phrase ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ is not preserved:

Mark 10:32-34	Luke 18:31-34
And they were on the way [ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ], going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. […] And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.”	And taking the twelve, he said to them, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise.”

The uniquely Markan emphasis here appears all the more remarkable when all uses of ὁδός across the gospel are taken into account. The term occurs nine times outside of Mark’s central section, eight of which are preserved in Matthew and seven in Luke. This suggests a clear shift in the use of this term within Mark 8:27-10:52. Where ὁδός has a simply descriptive function in the surrounding chapters, it is replicated in the other synoptics. Its additional literary function in the central section, however, is omitted by both Matthew and Luke.

Third, 'the way' provides the key transition between the opening and closing chapters of Mark. From the beginning of the gospel to Mark 8:26, Jesus' ministry occurs in northern Palestine. Numerous locations are involved, from Capernaum to Decapolis and Tyre, yet all are in the north. This changes from 10:52 onwards. After Jesus and his disciples heal Bartimaeus at Jericho, they pass on to Jerusalem where the final section of the gospel occurs. This geographical division of Jesus' ministry between north and south creates an unstated tension in the text between redaction and gospel tradition. 'The gospel of Mark', observes Baarlink on this point, 'quietly and subtly assumes that Jesus *must have often been in Jerusalem* and the surrounding area' (emphasis added).[198] When Jesus sends his disciples to bring him a colt from Jerusalem's outlying villages in Mark 11, for example, the owner is already familiar with 'the Lord' and is willing to give him what he needs (Mk 11:1-4). Likewise with the request for an upper room in Mark 14, where a Jerusalem resident knows who 'the Teacher' refers to (Mk 14:14). Jesus is also loved by residents in Jerusalem such as the woman who anointed his head (Mk 14:3) and Joseph of Arimathea (Mk 15:43). The unstated fact that Jesus must have been to Jerusalem before is made explicit by Matthew, Luke and John, who all record that Jesus was often there during his ministry (e.g., Mt 23:37; Lk 13:34; Jn 2:13). Mark's confinement of the Jerusalem material to the closing chapters results in an imposed movement from north to south, Galilee to Jerusalem. This structural feature is difficult to deny. Even Bultmann, for example, deviates from his otherwise sceptical view of Mark's structural skill[199] to comment on this geographical organisation.[200] This is precisely where 'the way' of the central section slots in. By repeatedly emphasising

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[198] Heinrich Baarlink, *Anfängliches Evangelium: Ein Beitrag zur näheren Bestimmung der theologischen Motive im Markusevangelium* (Kampen: Kok Verlag, 1977), 81: 'Das Mk-Ev setzt stillschweigend und unbetont voraus, daß Jesus öfter in Jerusalem und Umgebung gewesen sein muß.'
[199] Bultmann, *Tradition*, 375: 'Mk ist eben noch nicht in dem Maße Herr über den Stoff geworden, daß er eine Gliederung wagen könnte.'
[200] Ibid., 374.

the movement of Jesus and his disciples, Mark creates a literary bridge in 8:27-10:52 between north and south, allowing the reader to move with Jesus from his opening Galilean ministry to his closing Jerusalem passion. 'The way' is therefore not only structurally significant within this central section as was argued above, but the key feature that embeds these chapters within the gospel as a whole.

These three observations answer Hatina's understandable denial of this term's literary significance: 'it is very difficult to justify that the use of a *very common term* like ὁδός plays a technical role in the formation of a theme'.[201] Structurally central, unique to Mark and key to the gospel's wider geographical framework, 'the way' seems to be the defining feature of Mark 8:27-10:52.

'The Way' and the Exodus Motif

How does Mark's ὁδός tie in to the gospel's use of the exodus motif? This is a term, it should be noted at the outset, that functions in a wide variety of ways. E. Lohmeyer[202] and R. H. Lightfoot[203] have observed its crucial role in Mark's geographical theology. Luz has argued that it provides the primary connection between Jesus' journey towards his death in Jerusalem and the cross-shaped path his disciples are called to follow.[204] Watts and Marcus

[201] Thomas Hatina, *In Search of a Context: The Function of Scripture in Mark's Narrative* (London: T&T Clark, 2002), 168. The same objection is also raised by Gundry, *Apology for the Cross*, 442.
[202] Ernst Lohmeyer, *Galiläa und Jerusalem* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1936), 5.
[203] R. H. Lightfoot, *Locality and Doctrine in the Gospels* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938), 124.
[204] Ulrich Luz, "Das Geheimnismotiv und die Markinische Christologie," *ZNW* 56 (1965), 24.

have more recently drawn attention to its link with Isaiah's prophesied new exodus.[205] A key component of the term's rich significance, however, is the connection it establishes between Mark's central chapters and the exodus journey. A number of factors support this reading.

The first is the use of 'the way' in the opening citation. The gospel's first use of ὁδός is in Mark 1:2-3 with the twin references to the messenger sent to prepare the way of the Lord. As was argued in the first chapter of this dissertation, the use of Exodus 23:20 and Isaiah 40:3 anchors this citation within the world of the exodus. These verses in turn shed light on the gospel's central section, priming the reader to understand 'the way' of Mark 8:27-10:52 through the lens of Israel's exodus history. Gundry contests this link between the opening citation and Mark's later use of the term ὁδός. These two 'ways', he contends, are mutually exclusive: one is of glory and kingship, the other of suffering and shame. 'If carried out to completion […] by baptism, repentance, and confession of sins,' he argues, the way in Mark 1:2-3 'would have ended in wholesale acceptance of Jesus rather than in his passion and resurrection.'[206] The objection is plausible. The prologue rings with eschatological triumph. Crowds stream to hear the message of John in the wilderness, Jesus is publicly affirmed as the beloved of the Father, he triumphs over the devil in the wilderness, and proceeds to declare the coming of the long-awaited kingdom of God. Mark 8:27-10:52, on

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[205] Marcus and Watts independently reached the same conclusion in the early 1990s that the Markan 'way' shares several similarities with the prophesied new exodus in Isaiah 40-55. Their arguments are presented in Marcus' 1992 monograph *The Way of the Lord* and Watts' 1990 doctoral dissertation at Cambridge (later extended and published as his 1997 monograph *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark*). Both Isaiah and Mark, argues Watts, describe a new exodus deliverance in three stages. Mark progresses from (i) Jesus' evangelistic ministry of powerful words and deeds in Galilee and beyond to (ii) a journey with his 'blind' disciples, and then (iii) their arrival in Jerusalem. This 'structure displays broad parallels with the INE [Isaianic new exodus] schema' of (i) Yahweh's deliverance and healing of his exiled people, (ii) a journey where 'blind' Israel is led along a way they do not know, and (iii) the people's arrival in Jerusalem (p. 371). Marcus focuses on the semantic overlap between Mark 8:27-10:52 and the divine promise in Isaiah 42:16 'I will bring the blind by a way they did not know; I will lead them in paths they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight.' As was noted above, the two healings of the blind not only form the structural bracketing for Mark's central section but act as a tangible commentary on the disciples' gradual progression from metaphorical blindness to sight. The prominence of kingdom language in Mark 8:27-10:52 is a further semantic tie to Isaiah 40-55 highlighted by Marcus. Just like Isaiah's new exodus, he notes, 'the central section of Mark's Gospel is […] about God's way, which is his Basilea, his own extension of kingly power' (p. 33).
[206] Gundry, *Apology for the Cross*, 442.

the other hand, paints a very different picture. The whole section, as was shown above, revolves around a threefold prediction of suffering and an explicit rebuttal of the disciples' triumphalist expectations. Gundry's attempt to discern two competing 'ways', however, commits precisely the same mistake as the disciples - the inability to hold glory and suffering in tension. Their inability to comprehend the three passion predictions arises from the assumption that the cross and the crown are mutually exclusive, prompting Jesus' repeated teaching that the Christ *must* suffer (e.g., Mk 8:31). Alongside this, the rift between triumphant prologue and suffering central section is not as drastic as Gundry suggests. The prologue heralds the advent of God's kingdom (Mk 1:15), a theme which remerges with force in Mark 8:27-10:52. Similarly, the emphasis on suffering in the central passion predictions is anticipated by the the Baptist's ministry. He appears not in the palace or temple but in the wilderness, a place of spiritual humbling (see chapter two of this dissertation). In addition, his preparatory role, as Marcus argues, consists not only in teaching but in 'dying a martyr's death'. The pattern of John's life, summarised in the two verbs *preaching* (Mk 1:7) and *being handed over* (Mk 1:14), becomes the pattern for Jesus as he first *preaches* (Mk 1:14) and is then *handed over* (Mk 9:31; 10:33). This even anticipates the pattern for Jesus' disciples, who first go out to *preach* (Mk 3:14) and will later *be handed over* (Mk 13:9-13).[207] Far from there being a radical disconnect between 'the way' in the prologue and the central section, therefore, both exhibit the same tension between glory and suffering. The way of the Lord, heralded and prepared by the Baptist, is precisely the way of death - and resurrection - that Jesus must follow. Just as the triumph and trial of the prologue guides the reader's

[207] Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 42. The importance of the Baptist's suffering may also be reflected, suggests Marcus, in the description of his arrest and execution, which is more detailed than any other event outside the life of Jesus. To Marcus' argument could be added Mark 1:14, which presents John's arrest as the starting point of Jesus' own ministry. Jesus' teaching in Mark 9:12-13, examined in the last chapter, also links the Son of man's suffering to the martyrdom of the Baptist. In contrast to the scribes' triumphant expectations, the eschatological Elijah prepares the way not through universal restoration but cruel rejection.

understanding of ‘the way’ in Mark 8:27-10:52, so the exodus motif of the opening citation continues into ‘the way’ of the middle chapters.

In addition to this, the term ὁδός is a central feature in the Old Testament account of the exodus, providing literary coherence to the lengthy record of the wilderness years. In Exodus 3:18, 5:3 and 8:27, Pharaoh is commanded to let the children of Israel make a three-day journey (ὁδός) into the wilderness. In Exodus 12:39, when the Israelites finally leave Egypt, it is in such haste that they have no time to prepare provisions for themselves to take εἰς τὴν ὁδόν.[208] As they set out on the exodus proper, God does not take Israel along the way (ὁδός) of the Philistines but the way (ὁδός) of the wilderness. The presence of God then continues to guide them along this way (ὁδός) in a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night (Ex 13:21). This term becomes a literary bracket for the extended Sinai pericope at the heart of the exodus story. In Exodus 18, the final chapter before the Israelites arrive at Sinai, Moses meets Jethro and recounts to him all that his happened thus far ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ (Ex 18:8). During the Sinai passages, God anticipates the continuation of this journey in his covenant promise that his angel will accompany and guard Israel ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ (Ex 23:20) and in the threat following the golden calf incident that he will no longer go up with Israel when they continue ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ (Ex 33:3). The end of the Sinai pericope is signalled by the reoccurrence of the term in Numbers 10:33, which records that Israel ‘set out from the mount of the Lord three days' journey [ὁδός]. And the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them three days' journey [ὁδός], to seek out a resting place for them’. The term not only ties together the various stages of the wilderness years, but occurs prominently in summary passages that recount Israel’s desert itinerary. Numbers 33:8, for example, uses this term within the longest

[208] This adverbial phrase occurs only in the LXX and not in the MT, which may reflect a increased awareness over time of this term’s significance. It is notable that Mark, as was defended in the first chapter of this dissertation, draws from the LXX.

record of the exodus locations to describe Israel’s movement along the way through the wilderness (ὁδὸν διὰ τῆς ἐρήμου) towards Marah. Moses’ extended review of the wilderness years in Deuteronomy 1:19-3:29 refers a total of nine times to the way (ὁδός) that Israel took in the exodus. This term is not simply geographical, however. It is also used metaphorically for the distinctive way that Israel are to live. Jethro, speaking to Moses on the brink of the giving of the law from Sinai, tells Moses ‘to make known to Israel the way [ὁδός] in which they must walk and what they must do (Ex 18:20). The summary of the law in Deuteronomy 5 closes with the command for Israel ‘to walk in all the way [ὁδός] that the Lord your God has commanded you’ (Deut 5:33). The incident with the golden calf brings out the interplay between the geographical and metaphorical uses of this term. God’s anger is aroused because his people ‘have turned aside quickly out of the way [ἐκ τῆς ὁδοῦ] that I commanded them’ (Ex 32:8). The result? God will no longer continue with them ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ ‘lest he consume them’ (Ex 33:3). This interweaving of Israel's physical and spiritual journey is mirrored by Mark’s central section. As his been seen, ‘the way’ in Mark 8:27-10:52 provides the geographical link between the opening chapters in the north and the closing chapters in Jerusalem. This physical journey is paired, however, with the disciples’ journey of understanding. The use of ὁδός in each triad of teaching on Jesus’ passion and true discipleship indicates that ‘the way’ is more than just a geographical feature of these chapters. Just as with the blind man at Bethsaida, Jesus is taking his disciples by the hand and leading them slowly towards a clearer vision of both his and their calling. To borrow the language of Watts, ὁδός is used by Mark to indicate both a ‘spatial’ and a ‘sapiential’ journey.[209] Although Watts proceeds to link this to the interwoven physical and spiritual language of Isaiah’s new

[209] Watts, *Isaiah’s New Exodus*, 242.

exodus, it could equally be drawn from the earlier blending of these themes in the first exodus.

The connection between the transfiguration and 'the way' further cements this term's background in Israel's exodus history. The previous section argued in depth that the transfiguration in Mark functions as a second Sinai. From the overarching parallels of the divine voice on the mountain to the more intricate intertextual links such as the appearance of Moses and Elijah and the specific timing of the event, Mark 9:1-13 is replete with exodus imagery. It was also argued, *pace* Watts, that the transfiguration is not just one of a few 'isolated events and motifs which to varying degrees seem deliberately to echo Exodus categories'.[210] Numerous textual features suggest that these verses are a recapitulated prologue, a gateway to this new gospel section. If that is the case, Mark 9:1-13 is integral to understanding the entirety of 8:27-10:52. Just as the first Sinai was bracketed by references to Israel's 'way' (see above), so the transfiguration pericope is preceded by the start of the disciples' 'way' (Mk 8:27) and immediately followed by the continuation of this 'way' towards Jerusalem (Mk 9:33). The journey and mountain, just as in the first exodus, are inextricable. It is unsurprising, therefore, to find the exodus language that permeated this mountaintop experience also reoccurring in the surrounding journey.

These primary exodus links are complemented by a number of more minor textual hints that connect 'the way' to the exodus motif. It was noted above that Mark 8:27-10:52 includes several semantic shifts from the surrounding gospel. These include the seven references to the kingdom of God in this brief section - as much in the rest of the gospel combined. Kelber observes that six of these seven references are tied to 'entrance formula' as Jesus teaches who will enter this kingdom: it is better to be maimed and *enter into the*

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[210] Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus*, 49.

kingdom of God (εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ) than enter hell with two eyes (Mk 9:47); only those who receive the *kingdom of God as a child will enter into it* (εἰσέλθῃ εἰς αὐτήν) (Mk 10:14-15); it is difficult for those with wealth *to enter into the kingdom of God* (εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσελεύσονται) (Mk 10:23, 24); it is, in fact, easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man *to enter into the kingdom of God* (εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσελθεῖν) (Mk 10:25). This repeated emphasis is similar to the exhortations in Deuteronomy, which stipulate the criteria for entrance into the promised land (εἰσελθόντες κληρονομήσητε τὴν γῆν) (Deut 4:1; 6:18; 16:20). The similarities between these texts lead Kelber to conclude: 'the Markan entrance formula is ultimately derived from a translation of Deuteronomy's entrance formula into an eschatological key. Modelled after Israel's first entrance, the present journey into the Kingdom constitutes a second entry into the promised land'.[211] Swartley, building on Kelber's work, argues that the link between Mark's 'way' and the exodus journey is further strengthened by this central section's seventh and final kingdom reference. In Mark 9:1, Jesus indicates that only *some* of the present generation will remain alive to see the kingdom coming in power, a potential parallel to the situation in Numbers 14 where only two of the Israelite generation will live to enter into the promised land.[212] The connection is further bolstered by Mark 10:46, where Jericho is the final location on the 'way', immediately before Jesus enters Jerusalem. This may echo the role of Jericho as the first city in the promised land to be captured, marking the end of the wilderness journey and the start of a new chapter in Israel's history.

The wording of the final passion prediction might also indicate a link to the first exodus journey. In Mark 10:32, the gospel records that Jesus and his disciples were 'on the

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[211] Werner Kelber, "Kingdom and Parousia in the Gospel of Mark," Ph.D. diss. (University of Chicago, 1970), 109ff.

[212] Willard Swartley, "The Structural Function of the Term 'Way' (Hodos) in Mark's Gospel" in *The New Way of Jesus: Essays Presented to Howard Charles*, ed. W. Klassen (Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1980), 80.

way *going up* [ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ ἀναβαίνοντες] to Jerusalem'. The use of ἀναβαίνοντες may, as Marcus argues, be 'a technical term for festal ascent', albeit used with an 'ironic twist' in combination with the ensuing passion prediction.[213] Equally, however, it could be a reference to the exodus from Egypt. Morales observes that movement towards Egypt is associated with downwards motion throughout the Pentateuch,[214] rendered with the verb καταβαίνω in the LXX.[215] Conversely, any journey out of Egypt is characterised as upward motion with the verb ἀναβαίνω in the LXX. Abram went up (ἀνέβη) from Egypt once the famine was over (Gen 13:1), Jacob's sons went up (ἀνέβησαν) out of Egypt to return to their father after first meeting Joseph (Gen 45:25), Joseph went up (ἀνέβη) out of Egypt to bury his father in Canaan, and the exodus journey began with the announcement that Israel went up (ἀνέβησαν) out of Egypt (Ex 13:18). Following in the footsteps of the ancient Jews, Jesus is now going up on 'the way'.

Conclusion

Mark 8:27-10:52 is the story of a journey. A journey that ties together the gospel's opening and closing chapters. A journey that frames the disciples' growth in spiritual understanding. A journey that will end in Jesus' death. As this chapter has argued, this is a journey rooted in the exodus 'way' through the wilderness. From its semantic resonance with the exodus account to its overlap with Mark's opening citation and the transfiguration account, this central section of Mark's gospel reverberates with the exodus motif.

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[213] Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 36.

[214] Michael L. Morales, *Exodus Old and New: A Biblical Theology of Redemption* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2020), 48.

[215] For example: Abram went down (κατέβη) to Egypt during the famine (Gen 12:10), Isaac was forbidden from going down (μὴ καταβῇς) to Egypt during his lifetime (Gen 26:2), Jacob's sons went down (κατέβησαν) to Egypt for grain (Gen 42:2), and God told Jacob not to fear going down (καταβῆναι) to Egypt to live with Joseph (Gen 46:4).

This journey does not, however, end in jubilant victory. Its goal is not triumph but tragedy, not conquest but a cross. This is a journey structured around three passion predictions - each hammering home to the disbelieving disciples the fate that awaits Jesus. The last chapter argued that the transfiguration represents an anti-Sinai, a reversal of the exodus pattern as Jesus chooses suffering over glory. This reversal characterises the entire central section. The minor transposition of the familiar melody first heard on the mountaintop grows in volume with each step towards Jerusalem. The recapitulation of the exodus in the opening chapters has been surpassed by a new stage of Jesus' ministry, in which this age-old motif is increasingly inverted. Why this change? Why does Jesus not follow the pattern of the first exodus? Why must this second exodus lead to death and not to a promised land? It is not until the final chapters of Mark that these questions are answered.

Chapter 5: The Passover and the Passion

> Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when it shall no longer be said, "As the Lord lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt," but "As the Lord lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them." (Jer 16:14-15)

The exodus event was the archetypal redemptive act for the people of God in the Old Testament. Foundational to their national identity, it also functioned as a constant reminder of the power of God exercised on their behalf. The prophet Jeremiah, however, foresees this seismic event one day being eclipsed by an even greater act of redemption. There will come a time, he predicts, when the exodus will no longer be YHWH's supreme revelatory act. It is precisely such an eclipse, anticipated in a shadowy, geographic form by Jeremiah, that occurs in the final chapters of Mark.

The introduction to this dissertation observed that much of the literature on the exodus motif in Mark pays scant attention to the gospel's climactic passion narrative. It is true that a wealth of other Scriptural influences emerge in the Markan apocalypse and subsequent passion, for example Daniel's Son of man or the anguish of the suffering Psalmist. It is also true that the cruciform shape of the gospel's climax appears, at least on the surface, to be incompatible with the triumphant contours of the exodus. This section of this dissertation will argue, however, that the exodus motif remains a prevalent feature of Mark's account throughout these final chapters. This can be seen both in the interweaving of Passover and Passion and in the tearing of the temple veil as Christ hangs on the cross. This chapter will

focus on the former, seeking to establish three points. First, it will be argued that the Passover sheds primarily *theological,* not *chronological*, light on the Passion of Christ in Mark. Second, the Old Testament background to the collated Passover and 'blood of the covenant' language in Mark 14:22-26 will be examined. It will be demonstrated that both intertextual features function as *ritual gateways* to key moments in the exodus journey, namely the flight from Egypt and the arrival at mount Sinai. Third, it will be argued that Jesus imbues both Passover and the blood of the covenant language with new meaning, *appropriating* these exodus 'gateways' to anticipate his own death on the cross. It is precisely this appropriation that sheds light on the inversion of the exodus motif considered in the previous chapters. As Jesus reaches the end of his 'way' towards suffering and death, the significance of his impending Passion becomes increasingly clear. As will be seen both here and in the next chapter, the Son of God will achieve by his death an act of redemption that will not simply recapitulate the exodus but supersede it.

The Passover Framework: Chronology or Theology?

Mark's passion narrative is inextricably linked to the Passover. This can be most clearly seen in the way that the Passover creates the overarching timeframe, within which the events leading up to Jesus' crucifixion are carefully arranged. There is a marked shift in pace as Jesus' completes his journey along the 'way' and enters his final week in Jerusalem. The preceding account is condensed and hurried, with the events of several days often elided or narrated in quick succession. With the start of the Passion narrative, however, time begins to stretch out. To quote Pennington, 'everything else in Mark points and leads up to the final week of Jesus's life, and when the story gets to that point it slows down to a snail's pace,

giving the sense of how important and weighty these events are.'[216] The Passover provides a clear structure to this otherwise disorientating change of narrative pace. The beginning of the Passion narrative in Mark 14:1 is signalled by the statement 'it was now *two days before* the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread,' a phrase which Marcus describes as an 'attention-grabbing hypotactic construction, […] one of the Gospel's rare time notices, which sets the subsequent events within a Passover context.'[217] After the excursus with the anointing at Bethany and Judas' decision to betray Jesus, the return to the primary narrative is indicated by a further reference to the Passover, allowing the reader to mark the passage of time by the fact that it is now '*the first day* of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb' (Mk 14:12).[218] Following the interpretation of Jesus' upcoming death in the upper room, the hearer is once again able to follow the chronology of his arrest and trial by the reference to the Passover in Mark 15:6, which records that his appearance before Pilate occurred '*during* the [Passover] feast'. This framework causes the approach of the Passover to become synonymous with the approach of Jesus' death.[219]

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[216] Jonathan Pennington, "Atonement in the Gospel According to Mark" in *The T&T Clark Companion to Atonement*, ed. Adam Johnson (London: T&T Clark, 2020), 632.

[217] Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2005), 63.

[218] This phrase, which situates the sacrifice of the Lamb on the *first* day of the feast, has prompted considerable debate since the lamb was killed during the day on 14 Nisan, and the feast did not begin until 15 Nisan. Gundry provides a number of possible explanations for Mark's formulation, ranging from accommodation to a Gentile audience to growing demand on the Temple requiring the death of the lamb to occur after sundown, in other words on 15 Nisan in the Jewish reckoning of time: Robert Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 832. Regardless of the specific explanation, a Jewish precedent for describing the Passover sacrifices as taking place on the *first* day of the feast can be found in Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.1.3. For a further discussion of the chronology see: James Edwards, *The Gospel According to* Mark (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 420.

[219] Some scholars question the consistency of the Markan chronology on the basis of Mark 14:1-2: 'And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him, for they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people."' Rather than undermine the general emphasis on the Passion coinciding with the Passover, however, this simply strengthens the link. As was discussed in chapter 3 of this dissertation, Mark consistently presents Jesus as frustrating the purposes of the Jerusalem religious elite. This begins with the string of conflicts between Jesus and the scribes in Mark 2:1-3:6 and continues throughout the subsequent narrative. The reader is therefore primed to expect the *opposite* of the scribal resolve to transpire, in this case for Jesus' arrest to occur precisely during the feast.

In addition to this, Mark devotes considerable narrative space to the account of the disciples' preparations for the Passover meal from 14:12-16. This extended passage shares a number of features with the preparations for the triumphal entry in 11:1-7. Both sections contain the longest string of identical words of any two passages in the gospel: ἀποστέλλει δύο τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· Ὑπάγετε εἰς τὴν κώμην/πόλιν (Mk 11:1; 14:13). Both involve two disciples being sent on a covert mission. Both demonstrate Jesus' remarkable predictive abilities. Just as the opening verses of Mark 11 function as a framing devise for the triumphal entry, so the search for a Passover venue in Mark 14:12-16 sets the scene for the ensuing passion narrative. As Edwards remarks on the close connections between the two passages, 'the careful and deliberate preparations for the Passover are a clue that in this foundational event Jesus sees the proper context for his own self-revelation'.[220] This connection between Passover and passion is cemented in 14:22-25 as the Passover meal forms the background of Jesus' only explicit interpretation of his death in Mark.

Could this interweaving of Passover and passion be merely of historical interest, however? Could it simply be a *chronological* detail - rather than a *theological* foil? To answer this question, it is necessary to gain a broader understanding of Mark's approach to chronology throughout the gospel. From the opening verses it becomes clear that Mark has little interest in anchoring his gospel in world history. A cursory comparison between the beginning of Jesus' ministry as recorded by Mark and Luke makes this abundantly clear. Luke 3:1-2 prefaces the work of the Baptist and the appearance of Jesus at the Jordan with the remark that this transpired 'in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the

[220] Edwards, *Mark,* 421.

high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas'. Mark, by contrast, omits all historical context in his opening statement that 'John appeared, baptising in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins' (Mk 1:4). In an equally vague manner, he simply records that it was 'in those days' that Jesus came from Nazareth to be baptised by John (Mk 1:9). Boring's observations on the prologue are worth quoting in full:

> Where is the narrative focalised in time? Here we have neither the never-never land of the fairy tale's "Once upon a time..." nor Luke's definite "In the days of Herod the king..." (Luke 1:5) […]. One cannot determine how long John's ministry lasted, or how long he had been preaching when Jesus appeared on the scene, or how long he continued to preach after Jesus' baptism. The narrative is located *in terms of the story time of God's saving acts, rather than in terms of secular history*.[221] (Emphasis added).

Mark's lack of interest in tangible chronology is not just restricted to the prologue. Chronological connections between events are consistently vague throughout the gospel, alternating between the ubiquitous 'immediately' (1:10, 12, 18, 20, 21, 23 etc.) and the more generic 'after some days' (1:9; 2:1; 4:35; 8:1). Even when narrating events that are necessarily tied to 'the outside world', Mark demonstrates a striking lack of regard for secular chronology. A prime example of this is the death of the Baptist at the hand of Herod. A comparison of the Greek texts shows how differently Matthew and Mark describe the event:

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[221] Eugene Boring, "Mark 1:1-15 and the Beginning of the Gospel," *Semeia* 52 (1991), 67-8.

Mark 14:21-22	**Καὶ γενομένης ἡμέρας εὐκαίρου** ὅτε Ἡρῴδης **τοῖς γενεσίοις** αὐτοῦ δεῖπνον ἐποίησεν […], καὶ εἰσελθούσης τῆς θυγατρὸς αὐτῆς τῆς Ἡρῳδιάδος καὶ ὀρχησαμένης καὶ ἀρεσάσης τῷ Ἡρῴδῃ καὶ τοῖς συνανακειμένοις, εἶπεν ὁ βασιλεὺς τῷ κορασίῳ· Αἴτησόν με ὃ ἐὰν θέλ καὶ δώσω σοι·
Matthew 14:6-7	**γενεσίοις δὲ γενομένοις τοῦ Ἡρῴδου** ὠρχήσατο ἡ θυγάτηρ τῆς Ἡρῳδιάδος ἐν τῷ μέσῳ καὶ ἤρεσεν τῷ Ἡρῴδῃ, ὅθεν μετὰ ὅρκου ὡμολόγησεν αὐτῇ δοῦναι ὃ ἐὰν αἰτήσηται.

Mark's primary location of the narrative is in abstract time, opening the passage with the genitive absolute γενομένης ἡμέρας εὐκαίρου. The fact that this 'opportune day' happened to be Herod's birthday is almost irrelevant, briefly noted in a passing dative to explain the particular occasion for this fateful dinner. Matthew, by contrast, immediately situates the event in its historical context. His account, which in other respects closely follows Mark, opens with the precise time marker γενεσίοις δὲ γενομένοις τοῦ Ἡρῴδου. As Baarlink concludes, this is consistent with the way that throughout the gospel Mark 'is content with generic hints that reveal his lack of interest in chronological or topological detail. His hints regarding the place and time are […] so generic and colourless that often nothing definite can be inferred from them about the temporal sequence or geographical location.'[222] As was hinted in the quote from Boring above, however, Mark does not abandon the concept of time completely. To borrow the language of Drury, Mark substitutes secular chronology with 'sacred time'.[223] To put it another way, his frame of reference is not secular but redemptive history. Mark's infrequent use of precise chronological markers almost always emphasises a theological point. The first example of this occurs in Mark 1:13, where it is recorded that Jesus was tempted in the wilderness for 'forty days'. As was argued at length in the first two

[222] 'Mk begnügt sich in sehr vielen Fällen mit allgemeinen Andeutungen, die sein Desinteresse am chronologischen und topographischen Detail verraten. Seine Andeutungen der Ortes und der Zeit sind […] so allgemein und blaß, daß ihnen über den zeitlichen Ablauf und die örtliche Fixierung oft nichts Bestimmtes entnommen werden kann.' Heinrich Baarlink, *Anfängliches Evangelium: ein Beitrag zur näheren Bestimmung der theologischen Motive im Markusevangelium* (Kampen: Kok Verlag, 1977), 81.

[223] John Drury, "Mark" in *The Literary Guide to the Bible,* ed. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 407.

chapters of this thesis, Mark's description of Jesus' temptation is designed to evoke the memories of Israel's wilderness wanderings. Jesus' journey from the river to the wilderness, the emphasis on testing, the backdrop of angelic preservation - these intertextual links are cemented by the reference to Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness, a clear reference to Israel's 40 years in the wilderness. This precise chronology, atypical for Mark, anchors the scene therefore not in the geopolitical world of first-century Palestine but in the sacred world of God's redemptive dealings. The same occurs at the transfiguration. As was demonstrated in chapter three, the reference to a period of 'six days' in Mark 9:2 helps the reader to grasp the link between Sinai and the mount of transfiguration. Just as Moses waited six days before ascending to hear the voice of God from the cloud on Sinai (Ex 24:16), so Jesus and a select group of disciples ascend the mountain after the sixth day to hear the divine voice from the cloud. Although it is beyond the scope of this current thesis, the repeated emphasis on 'three days' as the *scripturally-mandated* time between Jesus' death and resurrection (Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:34) provides further confirmation that Mark's primary use of specific time markers is theological, not chronological.[224] The hearer has therefore been primed to understand the barrage of temporal links between the Passion and Passover (Mk 14:1, 2, 12, 14, 16, 24; 15:6) not in chronological but in theological terms.

This emphasis on 'sacred time' throughout the gospel presupposes a skilled gospel editor. It is worth noting that even without this presupposition, however, the Passover in Mark is still best understood as a theological foil for the passion narrative. This is illustrated in the writings of Bultmann, who approaches the gospel through a very different lens.

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[224] There are only two instances in the gospel where specific time markers are used chronologically and not theologically. In both cases, they are necessary details for for the hearer to understand a particular passage. In the second feeding miracle, the hunger of the crowds must be explained on the basis that they had continued with Jesus 'for three days' (8:2). In 5:21-43, Mark uses the period of 12 years as a literary device to tie together the woman's suffering (internal bleeding for 12 years) and the fate of Jairus' daughter (who died aged 12).

Viewing on the gospel as a collation of disparate pericope, Bultmann argues that Mark exercised limited editorial influence on his inherited material.[225] The lack of precise chronology in the gospel's opening chapters, he concludes, is not due to an editorial fascination with 'sacred time' but to the paucity of the traditional material, since 'temporal markers […] almost never belong to the essence of an individual story'.[226] Bultmann is aware that this lack of chronological precision in the early gospel is reversed during the passion narrative, with its frequent links to the Passover. Again, however, he contends that this does not indicate editorial oversight. According to Bultmann, this simply reflects the way in which the passion had become inextricably entwined with the Passover in early Christian thought. As a result, these frequent chronological markers had become embedded in the traditional material available to Mark.[227] This dismissal of editorial intentionality, however, does not lessen the theological significance of the Passover chronology. Even from Bultmann's perspective, the priority laid by early Christian communities on the connection between Passover and passion can only be explained theologically - whether or not the gospel editor shared this insight. Why else should early Christians drop temporal markers on other events in Jesus' life but cling so passionately to the Passover chronology? This conviction that the Passover is theologically significant for understanding the death of Christ is illustrated across early Christian literature, most notably in the writings of Tertullian (*Answer to the Jews* 10) and Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 4.10.1). Whether viewed through the lens of narrative or form criticism, therefore, it becomes clear that the Passover functions as the *theological* background to the passion of Christ.

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[225] Rudolf Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1933[2]), 375. Writing on Mark's limited editorial influence on the traditional material, Bultmann concludes: 'Mk ist eben noch nicht in dem Maße Herr über den Stoff geworden, daß er eine Gliederung wagen könnte'.
[226] Ibid., 381. 'die Zeitangaben […] so gut wie nie zur Voraussetzung einer Einzelgeschichte gehören'.
[227] Ibid., 366.

The Passover and the Blood of the Covenant: Ritual Gateways to the Exodus Journey

The Passover framework is not the only exodus reference in the Markan Passion. At the centre of the Passover meal, Jesus anticipates his death using the 'blood of the covenant' language from Exodus 24:

> And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." (Mk 14:22-25)

One of only two moments where Jesus articulates atonement theology across all three synoptic gospels,[228] and the only explicit explanation provided by Jesus in Mark as to the meaning of his death, this climactic collation of the Passover feast with the language of Exodus 24 is highly significant. It will be argued in this section that both of these features, the Passover and the blood of the covenant language, function as ritual gateways to two of the central moments in the exodus journey, namely the departure from Egypt and the arrival at Sinai.

First, the intricate connection between the **Passover** and the exodus deliverance from Egypt can hardly be overlooked. The earliest of the three Israelite feasts to be established, Passover's role as the defining moment in the exodus event is signalled by its prominence in the Jewish calendar, with the month of Nisan marking the start of the year (Ex 12:2). Its importance can be seen in the laborious and repetitive details surrounding its inauguration

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[228] Joel Green, "Theologies of the Atonement in the New Testament" in *The T&T Clark Companion to Atonement,* ed. Adam Johnson (London: T&T Clark, 2020), 117.

and celebration in Exodus 12, Leviticus 23, Numbers 9, Numbers 28, and Deuteronomy 16. This annual feast is the primary commemorative occasion for the exodus deliverance. This is enshrined in its name, *Pesach*, a reminder of YHWH *passing over*[229] his people when the Egyptian firstborn were killed on the final night of their sojourn in Egypt. The ingredients of the meal stipulated in Exodus 12:1-20 and Deuteronomy 16:1-8 are designed to evoke memories of the flight from Egypt: the bitter herbs recall the years of bitter service, the unleavened bread the affliction of Egyptian slavery and the need to depart in haste, the Passover lamb the central blood rite that secured their redemption from the avenging angel. This evocative meal is accompanied by an explicit liturgy designed to teach the children present of what God had done in the exodus: 'when you come to the land that the Lord will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. And when your children say to you, "What do you mean by this service?" you shall say, "It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses"' (Ex 12:25-27). One of the most significant sources for understanding

[229] The entrenched English rendering of פסח as 'to pass over' likely does not do justice to the original term. This difficult verb, occurring only 5 times in the Old Testament outside Exodus 12, is taken in the majority of English translations to indicate the *departure* of God's presence. This reading makes little sense, however, given the immediate context. Exodus 12:23 makes clear that 'the Lord […] will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you'. The departure of the divine presence, as פסח is often taken to indicate, is incompatible with this promise of defence. Isaiah 31:5, where this term appears in a similar context, offers a key to understanding this verb. Isaiah prophesies that YHWH will defend, deliver, *pass over* (פָּסֹחַ), and preserve Jerusalem. The double parallelism of this poetic prophecy indicates the four terms are intended to be synonymous. Passing over cannot therefore be taken as the departure or removal of the divine presence, but rather as YHWH *overshadowing* his people. The LXX translation of פסח as σκεπάζω (cf. Ex 12:13) confirms this rendering. Further confirmation can be found in the narrative context of Exodus 12, where the Passover is immediately followed by the overshadowing presence of YHWH in the pillar of fire, going before them out of Egypt and protecting them from the Egyptian army. From this point onwards YHWH's presence continues with Israel in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. The link between Passover and the presence of God appears in one of the subsequent Passover passages, Numbers 9:1-15, which records the second Passover in the immediate context of YHWH's glory descending and overshadowing the tabernacle.

Passover celebrations during Second Temple Judaism, the *Mishnah Pesaḥim*,[230] indicates that this condensed liturgy in Exodus 12 soon grew into a detailed series of questions and answers that recalled the various aspects of the flight from Egypt, linking each element of the meal to an aspect of the exodus deliverance.[231]

The Passover was more than simply a commemorative occasion, however. It also retained its function as an ongoing sacrificial event. At the inaugural Passover, the blood of the lamb was spread on the doorposts and lintels of each Israelite house (Ex 12:7). This blood, where the life of the animal represented the life of the Israelite, protected each household from destruction (Ex 12:23). Interestingly, the protection was from YHWH himself, for he was the one who would destroy anyone unprotected by the sacrificial blood (Ex 12:12, 13). This sacrifice was not restricted to the inaugural Passover, however. The Passover lamb retained its sacrificial function alongside its commemorative role in the feast. This can be seen in the Old Testament in Deuteronomy 16, where there are a burst of five consecutive references to the Passover as a 'sacrifice' (Dt 16:2, 4, 5, 6). Numbers 9:13 similarly refers to the Passover as 'the Lord's offering'. This function of Passover as a sacrifice is also implicit in Numbers 28, where the arrangements for Passover are integrated in an extended discussion of the various sacrifices that Israelites are to offer to YHWH. This emphasis on the Passover as a sacrifice continued into Second Temple Judaism. The reference to the Passover in Josephus' *Jewish War* 2.1.3, for example, makes no mention of

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[230] Although the *Mishnah Pesaḥim* was written around three centuries after the destruction of the Temple, it is widely regarded as a reliable account of Passover observance during Second Temple Judaism. The text admittedly focusses on Passover observance after AD 70, yet it frequently notes how this deviates from the standard practice while the Temple was still standing. In the list of questions to be asked during the meal, for example, it states '*When the Temple was still standing* one would ask: As on all other nights we eat either roasted, stewed, or cooked meat, but on this night all the meat is the roasted meat of the Paschal lamb. The final question was asked *even after the destruction of the Temple*: As on all other nights we dip the vegetables in a liquid during the meal only once; however, on this night we dip twice.' (Emphasis added, *Mishnah Pesaḥim* 10.4, quoted from Sefaria: https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah_Pesachim)

[231] Ibid.

the Passover meal, stating instead that the feast was ‘celebrated by a great number of sacrifices’. *Mishnah Pesaḥim* 10.5 similarly refers to the Lamb at the Passover meal as ‘the sacrifice of the Lord’s Paschal offering’. Mark shows this same understanding of the feast as a sacrifice in Mark 14:12: ‘and on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed (ἔθυον) the Passover lamb […].’[232] The effect of this ongoing sacrificial function is that each generation of Israelites are not only *commemorating* but are *participating* in the exodus event. Each year, those presenting the lamb as an offering renew the commitment to YHWH that the exodus generation first expressed with the blood on their lintels. The Passover is therefore both the historic gateway to the exodus deliverance and the recurring gateway, by which Israelites could relive this deliverance. This emphasis on reliving the exodus is made explicit in *Mishnah Pesaḥim* 10.5:

> In each and every generation a person must view himself as though he personally left Egypt, as it is stated: “And you shall tell your son on that day, saying: It is because of this which the Lord did for me when I came forth out of Egypt” (Exodus 13:8). In every generation, each person must say: “This

[232] This emphasis on the Passover as sacrifice explains why participation in this feast became synonymous with belonging to Israel. In the inaugural Passover, failure to participate in the blood rite resulted in physical death. The risk of non-participation continued into the subsequent commemorative events through this emphasis on sacrifice. Exodus 12:15 and 19 stress that anyone failing to keep the feast ‘shall be cut off from Israel’. The spiritual death associated with this banishment from Israel is emphasised in Numbers 9:13, where the one failing to participate ‘shall be cut off from his people’, explained as having to ‘bear his sin’. The connection between a failure to sacrifice and exclusion from God’s people is made explicit in *Jubilees* 49:12-13: ‘And the man who is free from uncleanness and does not come to observe [the Passover] on occasion of its day, so as to bring an acceptable offering before the Lord […] will be cut off; because he offered not the oblation of the Lord in its appointed season, he will take the guilt upon himself.’ This Passover sacrifice acts both *exclusively* and *inclusively*, however. Alongside its exclusion of those who fail to partake from community life, it also acts as an opportunity for widened community participation. Numbers 9 makes clear that the feast is open to those who are unclean or displaced, for 'if any one of you or of your descendants is unclean through touching a dead body, or is on a long journey, he shall still keep the Passover to the Lord’ (Num 9:10). Later in the same chapter, even non-Israelites are invited to participate, making the surprising allowance that there ‘shall be one statute, both for the sojourner and for the native’ (Num 9:14).

which the Lord did for me," and not: "This which the Lord did for my forefathers."[233]

The Passover is therefore inextricably linked both to a commemoration of and to an ongoing participation in the exodus deliverance from Egypt. This insight can be integrated into the observation from chapter 3 of this thesis that the deliverance from Egypt forms the first of three key stages in the exodus journey:

Exodus Journey		
Exodus Deliverance	Presence of God on Sinai	Mountain Theophany Prolonged in the Tabernacle
Ritual Gateway		
Passover Feast	-	-

During the Passover meal, Jesus introduces another reference to the exodus journey in the language of the **'blood of the covenant'**. Drawn from Exodus 24:8, this blood rite functions to seal the covenant relationship between YHWH and Israel, acting as a gateway to the subsequent Sinai theophany.[234] This narrative section begins with the promise in Exodus 23:20 (quoted in Mark 1:2 and discussed in the opening chapter of this thesis) that YHWH will 'send an angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared'. The presence of this heavenly messenger, sent to accompany Israel throughout their wilderness journey, comes with a warning: 'do not provoke him, for he will not pardon your transgressions; for my name is in him' (Ex 23:21). Obedience to this messenger will result in divine blessing and the gift of the promised land (Ex 23:27-31). Against this backdrop, YHWH invites Moses to bring the elders and all the people to ratify

[233] Quoted from Sefaria: https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah_Pesachim

[234] In the LXX, the phrase τὸ αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης occurs only in Exodus 24:8 and in Zechariah 9:11. There is widespread scholarly agreement that the latter is an eschatological adaptation of the former, meaning that Exodus 24:8 is the original Old Testament referent in Mark 14:24. For a defence of this position, including a discussion of the relevant passage in *Targum Jonathan*, see: Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 958.

the covenant (Ex 24:1-2). In preparation for this solemn occasion, Moses reads to the people 'all the words of the Lord and all the judgements' (Ex 24:3). Once the people declare their willingness to belong to YHWH and obey his voice (Ex 24:3), Moses constructs an altar with twelve pillars 'according to the twelve tribes of Israel' (Ex 24:4). Young Israelite men then sacrifice burnt offerings and peace offerings of oxen to YHWH, and Moses collects 'half the blood and put it in basins, and half the blood he threw on the altar' (Ex 24:6). Following a reading from the Book of the Covenant and the renewed commitment of the people to walk in obedience, Moses takes the blood collected in the basins and throws it on the people with the statement that this is 'the blood of the covenant' (Ex 24:8). It is on the basis of this blood rite that Moses and the elders are able to ascend the mountain of God in the very next verse for the pivotal Sinai theophany considered in chapter three of this thesis.

An understanding of the blood of the covenant's pivotal role in facilitating access to God can be seen in a number of Jewish texts. Its atoning quality, for instance, is made explicit in the second-century *Targum Onkelos* and the later *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*. On Exodus 24:8 *Targum Onkelos* reads 'Mosheh took the blood and sprinkled it upon the altar *to propitiate for the people*, and said, Behold the Blood of the Covenant which the Lord hath ratified with you upon all these words' (emphasis added).[235] Using similar language, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* reads 'Mosheh took half of the blood which was in the basins, and sprinkled upon the altar, *to expiate the people*, and said, Behold, this is the blood of the Covenant which the Lord hath made with you upon all these words' (emphasis added).[236] It is on the basis of this atonement that, as Silver notes, an eternal bond becomes possible between YHWH and Israel.[237] This bond brings with it both the blessings and warnings of covenant,

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[235] Quoted from Sefaria: https://www.sefaria.org/texts/Tanakh/Targum/Onkelos
[236] Quoted from Sefaria: https://www.sefaria.org/texts/Tanakh/Targum/Targum&Jonathan
[237] Robert Silver, *Exodus* (New York: MSI, 1991), 117.

for the blood 'signifies that the Israelites will incur blood guilt if they break God's covenant with them.'[238] Several points in the Babylonian Talmud reflect this view of the blood of the covenant as a gateway to God by linking it to the entrance rite of circumcision.[239] B.Sabb 137b, outlining the circumcision of proselytes, details that this prayer to be spoken at their circumcision: 'one who circumcises converts says: Blessed are You, Lord, our God, King of the universe, […] who has made us holy with His commandments, and commanded us to circumcise converts, and *to drip from them covenantal blood, as were it not for the blood of the covenant*, the heaven and earth would not be sustained' (emphasis added).[240] Similar language can be found in b.Sabb 134a and 135b, as well as in b.Ned. 31b and b.Yebam. 46b, which exegetes Exodus 24:8 as a guide to the 'essential requirement for all conversions'.[241] This application of 'the blood of the covenant' to circumcision, argues Propp, 'symbolically dramatises the concept that *all later generations stood with their ancestors at Sinai*' (emphasis added).[242] Through this blood rite, both the exodus generation and those that followed progress into the centre of the entire Sinai pericope, access to the presence of YHWH on the mountain.[243] Just as the Passover marked the start of the deliverance from Egypt, so the blood of the covenant becomes the gateway to the mountain of God:

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[238] Marcus, *Mark,* 966.

[239] Beale urges caution with these sources, both because they were penned several centuries after the fall of the Temple and because they may indicate a polemic response to the perceived Christian appropriation of the 'blood of the covenant' language in the eucharist. (G. K. Beale, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 230). Even if the specific application of this phrase to circumcision is a later tradition, however, it likely still reflects an earlier of the 'blood of the covenant' as the primary means of access to God.

[240] Quoted from Sefaria: https://www.sefaria.org/Shabbat

[241] Just as with the Passover feast, the blood of the covenant functions in the Babylonian Talmud both exclusively and inclusively. It was noted above that those refusing to participate in the Passover were to be cut off from Israel, and in the same way those not marked by the blood of the covenant are described as having no part in the people of God. Conversely, however, it is possible for proselytes who have no native connection to Israel to enter into this sacred covenant and mark their conversion by the shedding of the blood of the covenant in circumcision (b.Yebam. 46b, quoted from Sefaria: https://www.sefaria.org/Yevamot).

[242] William Propp, *Exodus* (London: Doubleday, 2006), 309.

[243] John Durham, *Exodus* (Waco: Word Books, 1986), 348.

Exodus Journey		
Exodus Deliverance	Presence of God on Sinai	Mountain Theophany Prolonged in the Tabernacle
Ritual Gateway		
Passover	Blood of the Covenant	-

Jesus' Appropriation of the Passover and Blood of the Covenant

Jesus' appropriation of the **Passover** involves two stages. He first *empties* it of its exodus significance, before *reinterpreting* it as a gateway to his own death. His emptying it of its initial significance can be seen in the number of omissions in Mark's account. This Passover meal contains no reference to the exodus. The meal lacks two of its most crucial elements, the bitter herbs and the Passover lamb. Unlike the liturgy prescribed in the Pentateuch and retained until Rabbinic Judaism, there is no catechesis, no calling to mind or reliving the flight from Egypt. These striking omissions have even led some scholars to

question whether this account describes a Passover meal at all.[244] As Edwards,[245] Hooker[246] and Stein[247] have argued in detail, however, the main features of this meal are too similar to records of first-century Passover celebrations to be incidental. The fact that there is such debate over this question, however, highlights the extent to which Jesus has distanced this meal from its original function as a ritual gateway to the exodus deliverance from Egypt.

Having emptied the Passover of its exodus significance, Jesus embarks on what Yarbro Collins terms a 'positive appropriation' of this ritual gateway.[248] There is a shift in focus away from 'liturgical significance and memory' towards 'the symbolism of Jesus' death'.[249] The two elements that remain in this meal, the bread and the wine, are imbued with

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[244] Bultmann, for example, argues that Mark 14:22-25 is a Hellenistic cult legend, drawn from Paul's writings on the eucharist, that was crudely inserted into the surrounding Passover framework (Bultmann, *Tradition,* 265). A number of significant differences between these verses and the more liturgically-oriented passages in Luke 22:14-23 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 speak against this argument, however. Mark omits the key command, found in both Luke and Paul, to 'do this in remembrance of me' (Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:25). The central imperative 'drink this' is similarly absent in Mark's account (cf. Lk 22:17, 19; 1 Cor 11:24-25). On the contrary, Mark 14:23 makes clear that the disciples drank from the cup before Jesus provided them with a theological explanation. These differences, combined with the fact that the disciples were already in the middle of a meal when Jesus introduced these elements (Mk 14:22), suggest that Mark is keen to situate this saying within the broader context of the Passover meal, and not as an isolated cultic insertion. To quote Gundry's rather blunt assessment of these verses, 'narrative obliterates liturgy' (Gundry, *Apology for the Cross*, 832). Yarbro Collins presents a slightly different argument that the Passover chronology of Mark 14 and the central meal 'appear to be independent stories or units of tradition placed one after the other, rather than two parts of the same narrative describing the same meal,' based on minor literary redundancies in verses 22-25 (Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 654). These arguments are outweighed, however, by the several indications that this account does describe a Passover meal.

[245] Edwards compares the progression of Mark 14:22-26 to the liturgical steps outlined in *Mishnah Pesaḥim* 10 for a Passover meal. Mark's account shares a number of the primary features detailed in the *Mishnah*, such as the drinking of wine at a certain stage of the meal (Mk 14:23), the theological interpretation of the elements of the meal (Mk 14:22, 24), and the conclusion of the evening with the singing of a Psalm (Mk 14:26): Edwards, *Mark*, 423.

[246] Hooker draws out 'certain features in the evangelist's account of the supper and the events afterwards which seem particularly appropriate if it were in fact a passover meal'. These include the late hour, the reclining at table, the substitution of water for wine and the fact that Jesus and the disciples eat within the city limits: Morna Hooker, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: A & C Black, 1991), 333.

[247] Stein approaches the question of whether this account refers to a Passover meal from a literary angle. His primary focus is on the Passover chronology in the preceding passage (see above), the emphasis on preparing such a meal in Mark 14:12-16 and the explicit literary connections made between this overarching framework and the meal itself in Mark 14:22 and 14:26: Robert Stein, *The Gospel According to Mark: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 649.

[248] Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 656.

[249] R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 568.

fresh meaning. In Deuteronomy 16, one of the Old Testament passages regulating Passover observance, the bread is designed to evoke the hardship of life in Egyptian slavery and of the urgent departure from Egypt, for it is both 'the bread of affliction' and a reminder that 'you came out of the land of Egypt in haste' (Deut 16:3). Jesus distributes the bread at this meal, however, with the command: "take, this is my body" (Mk 14:22).[250] The way in which Jesus *takes* bread, *blesses* it, *breaks* it and *gives* it to the disciples echoes the earlier feeding miracles, both of which use the same string of four verbs (Mk 6:41; 8:6). As Marcus observes, this results in 'the redemptive note [becoming] integrally connected to the bread symbolism', for the bread which is consumed and destroyed is the life-giving gift of God.[251] The wine, a later addition to the Passover meal, is also given new meaning by Jesus: "this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (Mk 14:24-25). The specific 'blood of the covenant' language will be considered below, yet it is immediately obvious that Jesus is once again placing his death at the centre of this element. As Edwards notes, 'the rich and symbolic elements of the Passover have become subsumed in Jesus' simple but momentous words of institution'.[252]

There is nothing nostalgic or commemorative about this meal. Jesus is not looking back at the exodus with his disciples. He is not, as *Mishnah Pesaḥim* mandates, reliving the exodus deliverance. This is an anticipatory meal. The emphatic "Truly, I say to you" and the expectation of the coming kingdom of God in verse 25 bring in an eschatological dimension.

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[250] Edwards makes the observation that Jesus' interpretation of the bread (τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου) uses the neuter pronoun τοῦτό, which agrees in gender not with the bread but with his body. The effect, argues Edwards, is to shift the emphasis away from the elements and towards Jesus himself. If this is a deliberate feature of the text then it serves to strengthen further the case that Jesus is both emptying the meal of its previous significance and situating himself at its new centre (Edwards, *Mark*, 426.)
[251] Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 964.
[252] Edwards, *Mark*, 425.

The focus is on Jesus' future death - and the glory that will follow. This meal does not revolve around past but future redemption, achieved not through the blood of the Passover lamb but the death of Christ. This appropriation of the Passover is consistent with early Christian understandings of the feast. The description of Christ as 'our Passover lamb' in 1 Corinthians 5:7, itself a very early text, is couched in a way that indicates this already to have become a 'stock tradition' with which Paul's readers would be familiar.[253] Melito's second-century homily *Peri Pascha* presents the same understanding of the Passover as inherently temporary, instituted in order that 'when the thing comes about of which the sketch was a type, […] then the type is destroyed, it has become useless, it yields up the image to what is truly real. […] The model is dissolved by the appearance of the Lord.'[254]

A similar positive appropriation occurs with the **blood of the covenant** language in Mark 14:24. Jesus places himself at the centre of this exodus gateway, for it is no longer 'the blood of the covenant' but '*my* blood of the covenant'. The introduction of the first-person pronoun, indicating that Jesus himself is the sacrifice who enables access to God, is complemented by the sacrificial language in the remainder of the verse, 'which is poured out for many (ἐκχυννόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν)'. The dynamic verb ἐκχυννόμενον indicates a violent shedding of blood. It is a term located at the heart of the Levitical sacrificial cult, occurring in the instructions for virtually all forms of blood sacrifice (Lev. 4:7, 12, 18, 25, 30, 34, etc.).

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[253] Hans Conzelmann, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, trans. James Leitch (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 99. On the basis that the phrase 'our Passover lamb' functions not as a predicative definition but a presupposition upon which the surrounding argumentation rests, Conzelmann argues that this must have been a widely accepted theological understanding by the time Paul wrote his epistle.

[254] Stuart George Hall, *Melito of Sardis: On Pascha, and Fragments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 75ff.

Coupled with ὑπὲρ, this sacrificial language builds on the transactional 'ransom saying' of Mark 10:45, as one life is given in exchange for another.[255]

This appropriation of the gateway sacrifice to Sinai also involves escalation. In Exodus 24:6, the blood of the covenant was sprinkled on the altar and on the people.[256] Here, this blood of Christ's sacrifice is drunk by the disciples. The concept of drinking blood is so striking that it prompts certain scholars to deny its authenticity. Klawans, for example, takes it 'as axiomatic that it is […] impossible to conceive of a plausible first-century CE Jewish teacher who advocates the eating of human flesh, or the drinking of blood of any species.'[257] Even Hooker, who defends the authenticity of this statement, admits that 'these words are extremely difficult. No Jew could have regarded the drinking of blood with anything but horror, for the blood represented the life of an animal and belonged to the Lord.'[258] *Pace* Cranfield, who argues that this act of drinking is '*analogous* to being sprinkled with the

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[255] This substitutionary language may, as Marcus argues, represent a blending of the Exodus 24 tradition with the Second Temple Jewish concept of an atoning death (Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 958). One answer provided to the reason for the terrible suffering of the Maccabean martyrs, there was a growing conviction that their deaths atoned for the sins of the people. This can be seen in passages such as 4 Maccabees 6:28-29, where the tortured Eleazar pleads with God on the point of death 'be merciful to your people, and let our punishment suffice for them. Make my blood their purification, and take my life in exchange for theirs.' A similar note is struck in 4 Maccabees 17:21-22, where the author notes that Eleazar and seven other martyrs 'become, as it were, a ransom for the sin of our nation. And through the blood of those pious ones and their death as an atoning sacrifice, divine Providence preserved Israel that previously had been mistreated.' The death of the youngest of seven brothers, recorded in 2 Maccabees 7:37-38, presents the same concept of ransom: 'I, like my brothers, give up body and life for the laws of our ancestors, appealing to God to show mercy soon to our nation and by trials and plagues to make you confess that he alone is God, and through me and my brothers to bring to an end the wrath of the Almighty that has justly fallen on our whole nation".' An analogous theology may also be reflected in 1QS 8:3-4, where the three priests appointed to the Council of the Community are to 'atone for sin by the practice of justice and by suffering the sorrows of affliction.'

[256] Jeffrey Stackert, "'This Is My Blood of the Covenant': The Markan Last Supper and the Elohistic Horeb Narrative," *Biblical Research* 62 (2017), 48–60. Stackert presents an unconvincing argument that the blood of the covenant in Exodus 24 was also drunk by the people in an attempt to strengthen the parallels with Mark 14. The argument both fails to account for the numerous prohibitions on blood consumption throughout the Pentateuch and the fact that Mark 14 does not parallel but supersede the Exodus account.

[257] Jonathan Klawans, "Interpreting the Last Supper," *NTS* 48 (2002), 6.

[258] Hooker, *St. Mark,* 342. See also France, *Mark*, 571 on the question of whether the disciples grasped what was occurring in the upper room: 'it is likely that the profoundly shocking idea, for a Jew, of "drinking blood", and even more than that of drinking the blood of their Lord, was so overwhelming that it left little room as yet for theological analysis.'

blood in Exodus 24'[259] (emphasis added), this shocking introduction of blood consumption to the familiar exodus language serves to escalate the ritual. Blood is not being sprinkled but imbibed, serving to heighten the connection between the sacrifice, Jesus, and those benefitting from it, the disciples. There is further escalation in the closing phrase 'for many', which hints at the far-reaching effect of this sacrificial blood. At the base of Sinai, only one generation of Israelites were sprinkled with blood and granted access to YHWH's presence on the mountain. The blood of Christ, by contrast, is not restricted to a single generation or ethnicity but is poured out 'for many',[260] a phrase which may be drawing on the refrain πολλοῖς [...] πολλοὺς [...] πολλῶν in the 'servant song' of Isaiah 53:11-12 LXX. The escalation continues in Jesus' anticipation of drinking again of the fruit of the vine in the coming kingdom of God. As was explored above and in chapter 3 of this thesis, the blood of the covenant in Exodus 24:8 is followed by a fellowship meal with YHWH on Sinai: 'Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank.' (Ex 24:9-11). As the blood of the greater sacrifice is shed, however, the result is not a fleeting meal in YHWH's presence but an eschatological banquet in the kingdom of God, where Jesus will 'drink anew of the fruit of the vine' (Mk 14:25).

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[259] C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to St Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 427.

[260] Stackert sees in this an inherent redefinition of the people of God. This perspective on Jesus' death as an atoning sacrifice is strengthened in Mark, notes Stackert, by the connection between the twelve pillars of altar in Exodus 24 and the twelve disciples surrounding Jesus at the Passover meal. Jesus is here redefining the people of God in anticipation of a great number being cleansed: Stackert, "This Is My Blood of the Covenant," 57.

Conclusion

The exodus motif loses none of its prominence in the final chapters of Mark. As the gospel nears its climax, the exodus rituals of the Passover and the 'blood of the covenant' emerge as the primary theological foils for the Passion of Christ. Unlike the opening chapters, however, this use of the exodus motif no longer involves recapitulation but supersession. Stripped of its initial significance, the Passover and blood of the covenant references are appropriated to anticipate Jesus' death. His suffering supplants the Passover lamb and sacrificial blood at the base of Sinai, heralding the dawn of a new redemptive event that will eclipse even the exodus.

Chapter 6: The Tearing of the Veil

> And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. And the veil of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he cried out and breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" (Mk 15:37-39)

The Passover meal, with its collated reference to the blood of the covenant, is not the final reference to the exodus motif in Mark. This chapter will explore a third 'ritual gateway' within the exodus journey, the veil to the Most Holy Place. A literary argument will be presented for understanding the tearing of the veil in Mark 15:38 is the climactic moment in the crucifixion narrative. This will be followed by an assessment of two competing views regarding which veil is torn and what it signifies. The chapter will close by anchoring this veil in its exodus context, demonstrating how, once again, the death of Jesus eclipses the redemption accomplished in the exodus.

The Climax of the Crucifixion Narrative

Does the torn veil in Mark 15:38 occupy a unique position in the account of Jesus' death? It is often portrayed as just one of several events accompanying his death or, in the case of Yarbro Collins, as simply a precursor to the centurion's confession, the primary focus of the crucifixion narrative.[261] Central to unlocking the significance of the torn veil is the literary concept of Markan intercalations. Sometimes referred to as Markan sandwiches (or

[261] According to Yarbro Collins, the centurion's confession is of central importance, representing 'the climax of the Markan theme of Jesus as the Son of God': Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 764.

the wonderfully unpronounceable German ‘Ineinanderschachtelungen’),[262] intercalations are an editorial insertion of one narrative into the centre of another. The result is a tripartite structure or simple chiasmus with the structure A - B - A’. They are a distinctively Markan feature among the synoptic gospels. Of the nine most widely accepted examples of intercalation in Mark,[263] only two are preserved in both Matthew and Luke.

There are two primary identifying markers of a Markan intercalation. The first, described by Marcus as their ‘telltale sign’,[264] is repetition. Particularly after the insertion of an extended narrative, Mark uses repetition to remind the reader that the final section is the continuation of an earlier event. This can be seen in the cursing of the fig tree narrative (Mk 11:1-26), interrupted by the ‘cleansing’ of the temple in 11:15-19. Here, the beginning of A' recalls the key event at the end of A. In 11:14 Jesus curses the tree ‘and his disciples heard it’. When the story is picked up in 11:21, the curse is recalled and ‘Peter, remembering, said to Him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree which you cursed has withered away”.’ The second feature is that A and A' form a coherent whole once the inserted central section has been removed. Mark 6:7-30 is the clearest example of this. The sending out of the disciples is split and the narrative of Herod and the Baptist’s death inserted. The editorial insertion can be seen by the fact that Mark 6:13 flows seamlessly into 6:30 once the central section is removed: ‘And [the twelve] cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them. […] Then the apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught.’ The same can be seen in Mark 14:1-11, where the removal of the central narrative of the anointing of Jesus’ feet leaves a coherent thought from 14:2 to 14:11: ‘[the chief priest and scribes]

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[262] See, for example: Erich Klostermann, *Das Markus-Evangelium* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1950).
[263] Mark 3:20-25; 4:1-20; 5:21-43; 6:7-30; 11:12-21; 14:1-11; 14:17-31; 14:53-72; 15:40-16:8
[264] Joel Marcus, *Mark 8-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 777.

said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people.” […] Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them.’

Both of these features are present in the tearing of the veil in Mark 15:38. In terms of repetition, 15:39 recounts the precise action of 15:37, the narrative interrupted by the intercalation in 15:38. In 15:37 Mark records the two details that Jesus ‘uttered a loud cry’ (ἀφεὶς φωνὴν μεγάλην) and then ‘breathed his last’ (ἐξέπνευσεν). Both of these actions are picked up in 14:39 as the centurion sees how Jesus ‘cried out’ (κραξας) and ‘breathed his last’ (ἐξέπνευσεν).[265] Mark 14:37-39 also has the second feature of a Markan intercalation, namely coherence when the central section is removed. In this instance, the removal of the central 14:38 does not disrupt the flow of thought from verse 37 to verse 39: ‘And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. […] And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he cried out and breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”’

If these are the features of a Markan intercalation, what is its function? As Nineham[266] and Bultmann[267] have demonstrated, at a most basic level they slow down narrative time. This either serves to allow other events to occur in the background or to heighten suspense. Building on their work, Fowler has identified a further effect of intercalations as ‘literary cement’, signalling to the hearer that the two interwoven events are to be understood in

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[265] The privileging of א and B in the NA28 at this point, which omit κραξας, seems to be an inferior reading since there is very strong manuscript evidence for the inclusion of κραξας. It is found in the fourth- and fifth-century uncials A, C and W. Wider geographical support for the reading can be found in sy[h], and it is contained in minuscules 28, 33, 565, 579, 700, all of which are consistently cited with a high degree of accuracy across Mark. The variant reading κραξαντα in Codex Bezae may also support this reading, with the possibility that D smoothed out the nominative κραξας ἐξέπνευσεν found in earlier manuscripts to the grammatically easier aorist accusative participle.

[266] D. E. Nineham, *The Gospel of Saint Mark* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), 112.

[267] Rudolf Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der Synoptischen Tradition* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1933[2]), 301-2.

concert.[268] A number of scholars, including Stein,[269] Kee[270] and Donahue,[271] have noted that Markan intercalations frequently have an additional theological purpose. To quote Edwards, 'the middle story nearly always provides the key to the theological purpose of the sandwich [intercalation]'.[272] The clearest example of this is the 'cleansing' of the temple, which is bracketed by the cursing of the fig tree in Mark 11:12-21. As a standalone narrative, the cursing of the fig tree is highly puzzling. It becomes understandable, however, in light of the editorial insertion from 11:15-19 as Jesus 'cleanses' the temple. As Walker notes, the withered fig tree comes to prophetically embody the fate of the temple.[273] Its shrivelled form illustrates how a failure to produce fruit at the time of visitation will result in immediate divine judgement. The intercalation of the disciples' first missionary endeavours with Herod's murder of the Baptist in 6:7-30 likewise provides a theological perspective on both events. Although each of these narratives is capable of standing alone, the insertion of the central section recording the death of the Baptist sheds theological light on the bracketing description of the disciples' mission and establishes a link 'between missionaries and martyrdom, discipleship and death' that becomes increasingly explicit as the gospel progresses.[274] The remainder of this chapter will argue that the intercalated tearing of the veil in Mark 15:38 has a similar function. The intercalation not only slows down narrative time and cements Mark 15:37-39 together as a single unit, it also acts as a theological key to the death of Jesus.

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[268] Robert Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes: The Function of the Feeding Stories in the Gospel of Mark* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1981), 165.
[269] Robert Stein,"The Proper Methodology for Ascertaining a Markan Redaction History," *NovT* 13 (1971), 184.
[270] Howard Clark Kee, *Community of the New Age: Studies in Mark's Gospel* (London: SCM, 1977), 56.
[271] John Donahue, *Are you the Christ? The Trial Narrative in the Gospel of Mark* (Missoula: SBL, 1973), 60-62.
[272] James Edwards,"Markan Sandwiches: The Significance of Interpolations in Markan Narratives," *NovT* 31.3 (1989), 196.
[273] P. W. L. Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City: New Testament Perspectives on Jerusalem (*Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 5.
[274] Edwards, "Markan Sandwiches," 206.

Tearing the Outer Veil: A Portent of Doom?

Numerous suggestions have been made for the theological significance of the torn veil, with Geddert listing as many as 35 possible interpretations.[275] One view that has gained recent prominence is that the **outer veil** is being torn as a portent of doom, a warning of the divine judgement that will befall the Temple in AD 70. The term καταπέτασμα in Mark 15:38, it is argued, is equally likely to refer to the inner or the outer veil of the Temple. Passages in the LXX (e.g., Ex 26:35, 37; 36:35, 37; Num 4:5, 32) and in the writings of Josephus (*War* 5.212, 219; *Ant* 8.75), illustrate the term being used interchangeably for both the inner veil in front of the Most Holy Place and the outer veil in front of the Holy Place.

Proponents of this view claim support from a number of ancient sources. A raft of early texts refer to strange occurrences in the Temple as portents of the devastation that occurred in AD 70. The earliest of these is Josephus' *Jewish War* 6.5.3. In a list of eight portents that occurred within the decade prior to the Temple's destruction Josephus notes:

> The eastern gate of the inner [court of the] temple, which was of brass, and vastly heavy, and had been with difficulty shut by twenty men […] was seen to be opened of its own accord, about the sixth hour of the night. […] This also appeared to the vulgar to be a very happy prodigy: as if God did thereby open them the gate of happiness. But the men of learning understood it, that the security of their holy house was dissolved of its own accord: and that the gate was opened for the advantage of their enemies. So these publicly declared that *this signal foreshowed the desolation that was coming upon them*. […] Moreover, at that feast which we call Pentecost; as the priests were going by night into the inner [court of the] temple, as their custom was, to perform their

[275] Timothy Geddert, *Watchwords: Mark 13 in Markan Eschatology* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 141-3.

> sacred ministrations, they said, that in the first place they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise: and after that they heard a sound, as of a multitude, saying, "Let us remove hence." (Emphasis added).[276]

This tradition seems to have also reached Gentile readers, being adapted by Tacitus in *Histories* 5:13:

> Contending hosts were seen meeting in the skies, arms flashed, and suddenly the temple was illumined with fire from the clouds. Of a sudden *the doors of the shrine opened* and a superhuman voice cried: "The gods are departing" […] This mysterious prophecy had in reality *pointed to Vespasian and Titus*. (Emphasis added).[277]

A similar tradition appeared several centuries later in the *Yoma* tractate of the Babylonian Talmud (*b. Yoma* 39b):

> The *doors of the Sanctuary opened by themselves* as a sign that they would soon be opened by enemies, until Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai scolded them. He said to the Sanctuary: Sanctuary, Sanctuary, why do you frighten yourself with these signs? *I know about you that you will ultimately be destroyed*, and Zechariah, son of Ido, has already prophesied concerning you: "Open your doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour your cedars", Lebanon being an appellation for the Temple. (Emphasis added).[278]

Early Christian writers also recognised the potential significance of this tradition for their interpretation of the torn veil in the gospel narratives. This can be seen most clearly in the writings of Jerome. On six separate occasions he links the torn veil to these portents reported

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[276] Josephus, *The Jewish War*, trans. J. Thackeray et al (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 265.
[277] Tacitus, *Histories*, trans. Clifford Moore (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 197.
[278] Babylonian Talmud, *Yoma* 39b: https://www.sefaria.org/Yoma

to have occurred shortly before the destruction of the temple. In his commentary on Matthew 27:51, for example, he ties the tearing of the veil to literature on the destruction of the temple:

> In the gospel that we have frequently mentioned [*Gospel of the Nazarenes*, fragment 51] we read that the upper lintel of the Temple, which was of immense size, was broken and split in two. Josephus, too, reports that the angelic powers, the former guardians of the Temple, equally cried out at that time: "Let us pass from this dwelling place."[279]

This array of evidence, cited to varying extents by Lane,[280] France,[281] and Edwards,[282] amongst others, is presented as the definitive argument that Mark is referring to the outer veil being torn in a symbol of impending divine judgement on the Temple. On closer examination, however, there are two significant flaws with this reasoning. The first is simply that this barrage of quotations only represents a single tradition. At first glance the list of authors appears diverse - a mixture of Jewish and Christian texts from several successive centuries. For Lane, the fact that such '*divergent* […] Jewish and Jewish-Christian traditions' all come to the same conclusion is proof that 'the event [was] a warning sign of the impending destruction of the Temple' (emphasis added).[283] Brown has more recently demonstrated, however, that these numerous authors in essence represent only one tradition, namely that of Josephus.[284] Each quotation includes either explicit reference or implicit semantic and

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[279] This is frequently quoted out of context by proponents of the 'divine judgement' thesis. Interestingly, however, Jerome himself is using the legend of Josephus to demonstrate how the torn veil enabled greater access to God. The section quoted above opens: 'All the mysteries of the Law that were previously woven together were made known and passed to the Gentile people…': Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, trans. Thomas Scheck (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 300.

[280] William Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 575.

[281] R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 658.

[282] James Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 479.

[283] Lane, *Mark*, 575.

[284] Raymond Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 1112.

thematic overlap with Josephus' original description of the portents of divine displeasure. Rather than representing the mind of numerous authors, therefore, this line of evidence hangs simply on the original work of Josephus. The second problem with this array of evidence is simply that none of the Jewish texts linking unexpected occurrences to the later destruction of the Temple actually mention the veil. From Josephus to Tacitus and later Rabbinic tradition, the focus is on the outer wooden doors, namely the barrier dividing Jews and Gentiles. It is not until the *Gospel of the Nazarenes* (as cited by Jerome) that this tradition is shoehorned into the gospel narrative. It is therefore somewhat of a stretch when Hooker labels the torn veil of Mark 15:38 a 'similar story'[285] to the legends of open doors and broken lintels.

Proponents of the torn veil as a symbol of judgement also argue that this is consonant with Mark's wider emphasis on divine displeasure. France provides the clearest expression of this argument, describing the torn veil as an act of 'divine vandalism', the climax of the 'temple theology' that has characterised the final section of Mark.[286] This concept of 'temple theology', namely that Jesus has come to judge and replace the physical temple, is drawn from four passages towards the end of the gospel. The first of these is the intercalation of the fig tree and the 'cleansing' of the Temple in Mark 11:12-21. As was noted above, the cursing and withering of the fig tree, bound together in the narrative with Jesus' acts in the temple, become a poignant symbol of the divine judgement that will soon fall on the temple. This implicit warning then becomes explicit in the opening two verses of Mark 13:

> And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" And Jesus

[285] Morna Hooker, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: A & C Black, 1991), 378.
[286] France, *Mark*, 658.

> said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”

This prompts the synoptic apocalypse as Jesus describes when these things will take place and what the sign of their coming will be. This theme of impending destruction is picked up again in Mark 14:58, where the first charge Mark narrates from the false witnesses is “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.” This phrase is then repeated in the following chapter by the mocking crowds at the cross: ‘And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, “Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!”’ (Mk 15:29-30). In a lengthy discussion of these passages, Walker concludes that ‘Jesus through his resurrection will establish a new Temple […] and that this in turn will be in some way connected with the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple.’ This generates ‘a great drama in Mark’s narrative as the tension between the two ‘temples’ is played out’.[287] For Walker, France, and others, the death of Jesus seems to be the triumph of the physical temple and its rulers, yet the torn veil in 15:38 is the reminder that this triumph will be short lived. After three days the temple made without hands will triumph, whilst the physical temple will meet its inevitable demise in AD 70. A number of Patristic authors share this perspective in their presentations of the torn veil as an act of divine judgement, most notably Tertullian *Adv. Marc.* 4.42, Chrysostom *Homilies on Matthew* 88.2, and Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 1.41.

[287] Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City,* 11.

There can be no doubt that Mark 11:12-21 and 13:1-37 anticipate the future destruction of the Temple. The question, however, is whether this destruction is linked to the death of Jesus. The key passage required for this connection is the accusation in Mark 14:58, Jesus' reported claim to destroy the physical Temple and replace it with one made without human hands. A number of features in the Markan narrative indicate, however, that this accusation is being levelled maliciously and ought not to be taken at face value by the reader. At a most basic level, it is not Jesus saying these words. These are the claims of his enemies - just as it Jesus' enemies who pick up this same accusation at the cross in 15:29-30. More than this, Mark makes explicit that this was a *false testimony.* He prefaces the charge with the words 'then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him' (Mk 14:57) and then immediately qualifies this charge in 14:59 that 'even here their testimony did not agree.' This is in stark contrast to John, who records the words "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days" coming directly from Jesus (Jn 2:19). Even Matthew, who follows Mark more closely, removes the bracketing remarks that this witness was both false and disputed, writing instead 'Finally two came forward and declared, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.'" (Mt 26:60-61). The use of 'finally' to distinguish this charge from the previous false charges and the emphasis that two witnesses both agreed on this charge ('In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.' 2 Cor 13:1) lends a degree of credibility to the charge in Matthew's narrative that is withheld by Mark. Although there is an emphasis on the destruction of the temple elsewhere in Mark, it does not seem to be the primary feature emphasised in the death of Christ. As a result, it does not seem likely that the torn veil is being torn as a symbol of divine judgment in Mark 15:38.

In addition to this, a number of sources, including Josephus *War* 5.212 mentioned above, record that the outer veil covered a set of wooden doors. The tearing of this outer veil would therefore simply uncover the bolted doors immediately behind it - an act carrying little significance. Not only this, but the opening of this partition was a frequent occurrence in the Temple. From the earliest days of the tabernacle, priests were required to enter the Holy Place on a daily basis to replace the shewbread, trim the lamps, and burn incense (Ex 25:30; 27:20; 30:7-10 etc.). This frequent duty continued into the Second Temple and was usually observed by the assembled crowds (Lk 1:8-10). The opening of this partition at the death of Jesus, albeit in an unusually dramatic way, would therefore not be a particularly outrageous or even uncommon act to an early reader.

Tearing the Inner Veil: Accessing God's Presence

Given the problems with reading Mark 15:38 as a divine warning of impending judgement, how else could this verse be understood? Several factors speak for the **inner veil** being torn as a sign of new access to God. This begins on a semantic level. As was seen above, proponents of the torn veil as a portent of divine judgement argue that καταπέτασμα is equally likely to refer to the inner or the outer veil of the Temple. Several factors indicate, however, that the term's primary usage is for the inner veil. Of the 33 occurrences of καταπέτασμα the LXX, only 11 refer to the outer veil. Narrowing this down to the construction of the tabernacle in the book of Exodus, only 5 of the term's 20 occurrences refer to the outer veil. In the Masoretic text, the two veils are consistently distinguished by the terms מָסָךְ (outer veil) and פָּרֹכֶת (inner veil). This distinction is preserved on a number of occasions in the LXX, where the outer veil is termed κάλυμμα to distinguish it from the inner καταπέτασμα (e.g., Ex 27:16; 40:5; Num 3:25). This semantic distinction continued in some

texts until the first century AD, for example in Philo's *Life of Moses*, which refers to the Temple's 'two woven screens, the inner and the outer, called respectively the veil (καταπέτασμα) and the covering (κάλυμμα).'[288] Although, as has been seen, there are instances where καταπέτασμα describes the outer veil, its usage in technical contexts therefore seems frequently to be reserved for the inner veil.

Linking Mark 15:38 to the inner veil is also supported by a number of early Christian sources with far greater similarity to Mark than the passages cited above in favour of the outer veil. Outside of the synoptic accounts of the crucifixion, the only occurrences of καταπέτασμα in the New Testament are in the book of Hebrews. Three key passages explore the significance of Jesus' death in terms of the cultic veil. The first occurs in Hebrews 6:

> We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the veil (καταπέτασμα), where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. (Heb 6:19-20)

This brief reference to the veil uses καταπέτασμα for the veil that leads to the 'inner place'. The reference to the high priest anchors this verse in the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) ritual, where the high priest would enter the Holy of Holies once a year through the veil. Several commentators pass over the reference to the veil in this verse, treating it as a precursor to the much fuller discussion of the veil and its connection to Jesus' death in Hebrews 9-10.[289] The lack of explanation for the veil imagery in this verse could, however, indicate that the writer is employing a concept already familiar to his hearers. The situation may be analogous to 1 Corinthians 5:7, examined in the previous chapter, where Paul inserts

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[288] Philo, *Life of Moses* 2.8.101, trans. F. H. Colson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), 499.
[289] One example of this is Attridge, whose commentary states on this verse: 'as with other suggestive images, this first reference does not provide much help in explaining the allusion. Some clarification will later emerge.' Harold Attridge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 184.

a reference to Christ as 'our Passover lamb' without further comment. The implication of this brevity, drawn by Conzelmann, is that Paul is drawing on a 'stock tradition',[290] a theological concept already familiar with his audience. This veil imagery is developed further in an extended passage in Hebrews 9:

> Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lamp stand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place. Behind the second veil (καταπέτασμα) was a second section called the Most Holy Place. […] The priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people. By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the Holy Places is not yet opened as long as the first tent is still standing. […] But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the Holy Places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. (Heb 9:1-12)

Three features in this rich passage illustrate an early Christian understanding of the inner veil. The first is the unfavourable portrayal of the tabernacle cult. As Attridge comments, this presentation 'of the earthly tabernacle and its associated rituals […] is not, as in Jewish apologetics, a positive one, involving cosmic or mystical significance, but a negative one.'[291]

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[290] Hans Conzelmann, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, trans. James Leitch (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 99.
[291] Attridge, *Hebrews*, 240.

In this summary of the Yom Kippur ritual the emphasis lies on the limited access it provided to the Holy Place behind the veil. Although the priests regularly went into the Holy Place, they were categorically excluded from the epicentre of God's presence in the Most Holy Place. Even the annual 'access that the high priest has to that sacred realm does not signify its openness, but is only, as it were, the exception that proves the rule.'[292] This negative portrayal of the cult extends to the atonement provided for the people on Yom Kippur, which is described as covering only the unintentional sins (ἀγνοημάτων) of the people.[293] This leads to the second feature, the emphasis on the superior redemption found in Christ. His high priesthood is of 'the good things that have come', for his ministry is in the 'greater and more perfect tent'. His atonement is not achieved with the blood of animals, but 'by means of his own blood'. The access he grants is not to the physical Most Holy Place but to the heavenly 'Holy Places'. The redemption he secures is not fleeting or annually repeated but 'eternal'. To quote Lane, 'the provision [...] of free access to the heavenly sanctuary through Christ throws into bold relief what the cultic provisions of the old covenant could not achieve. The entire cultic ministry of the tabernacle was only a temporary provision in the outworking of God's redemptive purpose for his people.'[294] This links to the third feature of the passage, namely that Jesus' greater ministry requires the removal of the tabernacle cult. Verse 8 makes this explicit: 'the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the Holy Places is not yet opened as long as the first tent is still standing (ἔτι τῆς πρώτης σκηνῆς ἐχούσης στάσιν).' Consonant with the negative portrayal of the tabernacle cult mentioned above, the writer emphasises that this cult is not simply obsolete but a hindrance. An interesting example of this same emphasis in another early Christian text is the Gospel of Philip. In an extended discussion of the

[292] Ibid.
[293] This restriction is interestingly not explicit in the inauguration of Yom Kippur in Leviticus 16, although it can be found in later Rabbinic literature.
[294] William Lane, *Hebrews 1-8* (Dallas: Word Books, 1991), 225.

Temple, the author betrays his lack of familiarity with the building by describing as composed of three separate buildings: 'the one, opened to the west, was called the Holy. Another, opened to the south, was called the Holy of the Holy. The third, opened to the east, was called the Holy of the Holiest, the place where a priest enters alone.' This is followed by further comment on the 'Holy of the Holiest', where the author notes that 'its veil is rent from the top to the bottom as an invitation for the chosen to enter'.[295] Just as in Hebrews 9:8, the way of cultic access must first be abolished before 'the chosen' can enter. Access to the inner sanctuary is not facilitated but hindered by the tabernacle veil. Only in its destruction is there a way of entry. That this should be emphasised by an author who has a clear lack of knowledge about the physical Temple illustrates how entrenched this insight had become in early Christian thought. This is explored further in the final reference to the inner veil in Hebrews:

> Therefore, my brothers and sisters, we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the veil that is his flesh. (Heb 10:19-20)

The opening οὖν anchors the passage in the preceding discussion of the Day of Atonement and the passage through the veil now purchased by Jesus' blood. Once again, the superiority of this access to the Most Holy Place is emphasised. The entrance provided by Jesus is both new (πρόσφατον) and living (ζῶσαν). It is 'new' because it definitively replaces the old tabernacle cult. It is 'living' in the same sense as 1Peter 2:4, John 4:10 and John 6:51 - it is imbued with divine life. The difficult phrase διὰ τοῦ καταπετάσματος τοῦτ' ἔστιν τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ at the close of verse 20 has been explained in a variety of ways. Westcott interprets it

[295] *The Gospel of Philip* 2.69-70, trans. James Robinson (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 180.

as a descriptive genitive, adding further detail to τὴν εἴσοδον in the preceding verse.[296] Hofius argues that the preposition διὰ governs both καταπετάσματος and σαρκὸς, creating a dual explanation that this entrance is *through* the veil, *by means of* Jesus' flesh.[297] Attridge argues convincingly, however, that the idiomatic usage of the phrase τοῦτ' ἔστιν in the book of Hebrews precludes both of these interpretations. The 'veil' and 'flesh' in this verse, he contends, must be read in apposition. The writer, in other words, is establishing a 'symbolic equivalence' between these two terms.[298] Chapter 9, the foundation for this summary statement, sheds light on the precise import of this equivalence. As was argued above, Hebrews 9:1-12 emphasises both the need for the removal of the tabernacle cult and the centrality of Christ's death in the purchase of a greater redemption. Both of these features come together in the apposition of 'veil' and 'flesh' in Hebrews 10:20. In this 'daring, poetical touch', the author of Hebrews 'allegorises the veil as the flesh of Christ.'[299] The tabernacle veil is rendered obsolete, eclipsed by the superior access to the divine presence made possible by the sacrifice of Christ in his flesh.

These texts are fully consonant with the tearing of the veil in Mark 15:38. The similarities are so striking that several scholars have suggested a connection between Mark's account and the Epistle to the Hebrews. To quote F. F. Bruce, Mark's 'passion narrative is to the same effect as that of our epistle [i.e., Hebrews]; in both instances the teaching is given a cultic form, which is expressed realistically in the Gospel and symbolically by our author.'[300] The previous chapter of this thesis explored the language of Passover and the 'blood of the covenant' in Mark 14. In both instances, it was argued, Jesus empties these ritual gateways of

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[296] Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1889), 320ff.
[297] Otfried Hofius, *Der Vorhang vor dem Thron Gottes: Eine Exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung Zu Hebräer 6,19 und 10,19* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1972), 79-82.
[298] Attridge, *Hebrews*, 286.
[299] James Moffatt, *Hebrews* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1924), 143.
[300] F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1967), 246.

their original significance. Both symbols are appropriated and redefined. Just as in Hebrews and the Gospel of Philip, the old cult is not recapitulated but superseded. There is also an emphatic escalation of previous rituals. Retrospection is replaced by eschatology (Mk 14:25). The sprinkled blood of animals is replaced by the imbibed blood of God's Son (Mk 14:24). Redemption is no longer for few but 'for many' (Mk 14:24). Fellowship with the Divine is no longer fleeting but in the eternal kingdom of God (Mk 14:25). Just as Hebrews focusses on the 'new' and 'living' access that Jesus has provided for his people, so Mark also emphasises the coming together of heaven and earth as Jesus cries his last and the veil is torn. This can be seen in the dramatic verb σχίζω, which occurs at only one other point in the gospel when the heavens are torn at the baptism of Jesus (Mk 1:10). For a brief moment at the baptism, heaven and earth touched as the barrier between the two realms was torn. It is fitting that Jesus' ministry should end on a similar note, a tearing of the previously impenetrable barrier between heaven and earth. [301] To quote Gurtner, 'Mark uses the *velum scissum* to bracket his entire gospel with the splitting open of heaven, creating a "cosmic inclusio". […] Mark has then brilliantly revealed Jesus as "Son of God" at the splitting of the heavens at Jesus' baptism and at the splitting of the veil at the "baptism" of Jesus' death.'[302] R. H. Lightfoot further brings out the significance of this *inclusio*: 'heaven and earth were joined in an irrevocable, unbreakable union. […] The barrier which had hitherto existed between God and man, a barrier so strongly emphasised in Jewish religion, has been broken down. In [Jesus] earth has now been raised to heaven.'[303] The access to the divine accomplished by the death of Christ and the tearing of the veil can also be seen in the centurion's confession in 15:39:

[301] The link between the baptism and crucifixion is further cemented by the centurion's confession "Surely this man was the Son of God!" (Mk 15:39), the human echo of the Father's affirmation in 1:11 "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

[302] Daniel Gurtner, "The Veil of the Temple in History and Legend," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49 (2006), 113.

[303] R. H. Lightfoot, *The Gospel Message of St. Mark* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950), 56.

"Truly this man was the Son of God!" As was argued above, this forms the closing bracket to Mark's climactic intercalation, linking it literarily to the torn veil. This confession marks the resolution of the dramatic irony that has run throughout the gospel from its opening verse. From the outset, the hearer has known that the protagonist is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As the narrative unfolds, however, only 'other-worldly' characters recognise his true identity. The Father twice acknowledges Jesus to be his Son (Mk 1:11; 9:7) and the demons likewise twice recognise Jesus as the Son of God (Mk 3:11; 5:7). At no point, however, does a human character perceive his true identity. Only as Jesus dies and the veil is torn is this 'other-worldly' perspective granted to a human. It is notable that the first person to grasp that he stands in the presence of the Son of God is a Gentile - the first of 'the many' that Jesus anticipated would benefit from his sacrifice.

Replacing the Third Ritual Gateway

How does this link to the exodus motif? As the references to the veil in Hebrews make clear, this cultic barrier is anchored in the tabernacle. The extended discussion of the veil in Hebrews 9 and 10 occurs with reference only to the Tabernacle, never to the Temple. Even the emphasis on supersession involves no reference to the Temple, rather it is the 'first tent' (Heb 9:8) that proved an obstacle to unfettered access to God. To quote Attridge, Hebrews 9-10 makes clear that 'the image of the veil is rooted in the Old Testament's accounts of the desert tabernacle.'[304] As was argued at length in chapter 3 of this thesis, the inauguration of the Tabernacle occupies a central position in Israel's exodus journey. The tabernacle, it was shown, formed the climax of the three exodus theophanies on Sinai. The voice of YHWH, ringing out from the summit of the holy mountain, gave a single command

[304] Attridge, *Hebrews,* 184.

for Moses: to construct a tabernacle. As Lundquist and Morales demonstrate, this tabernacle functions as the 'architectural embodiment of the cosmic mountain'.[305] The tent is designed to imbue the fleeting theophany on Sinai with permanence, preserving the mountaintop experience in a physical structure. The three sections of the tabernacle directly mirror the stages of Sinai, each with corresponding rules of access. The mountain's base becomes the outer court where all the people may come. The mountainside becomes the Holy Place, reserved for the spiritual leaders of the people. The summit becomes the Most Holy Place, where only a single representative of the people may ascend at God's invitation.[306] As was explored in chapter 3, this leads to the following progression within the exodus journey:

Exodus Journey		
Exodus Deliverance	Presence of God on Sinai	Mountain Theophany Prolonged in the Tabernacle

In the previous chapter on the Passover and the passion, it was noted that the first two stages of this journey have clear ritual gateways:

Exodus Journey		
Exodus Deliverance	Presence of God on Sinai	Mountain Theophany Prolonged in the Tabernacle
Ritual Gateway		
Passover Feast	Blood of the Covenant	-

Given the common emphasis in Hebrews, Mark and the Gospel of Philip, this chapter has argued that the tabernacle veil functions as the climactic point of entry to the tabernacle's Most Holy Place. Just as the Passover was the gateway to the deliverance from Egypt and the

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[305] John Lundquist, "What is a Temple? A Preliminary Typology" in *The Quest for the Kingdom of God: Studies in Honor of George E. Mendenhall*, ed. Alberto Green et al. (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 207.

[306] Michael L. Morales, *The Tabernacle Pre-Figured: Cosmic Mountain Ideology in Genesis and Exodus* (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 255.

blood of the covenant the prerequisite to ascending mount Sinai, so the inner veil functions as the final threshold to be crossed before entering the tabernacling presence of God:

Exodus Journey		
Exodus Deliverance	Presence of God on Sinai	Mountain Theophany Prolonged in the Tabernacle
Ritual Gateway		
Passover Feast	Blood of the Covenant	Inner Veil

Bringing together the insights of this and the previous chapter, the tearing of the veil in Mark 15:38 functions in complete harmony with the preceding Passion narrative. At the last supper, Jesus empties both the Passover feast and the blood of the covenant of their former significance. In place of their links to the Israel's founding history, Jesus reinterprets them in light of his own death, appropriating these rituals as his own redemption eclipses that of the exodus. As Jesus dies on the cross, the tearing of the veil signals the end of this final ritual gateway. This barrier between the people and the architecturally-preserved Sinai theophany has been rendered obsolete, superseded by a new, living access to God.

Conclusion

Here, at last, emerges the answer to the inverted exodus of the central chapters. Why was the mountaintop glory of Jesus not preserved but laid aside? Why did his journey along the exodus 'way' not culminate in triumph but in tragedy? Each of the three theological windows into the purpose of Christ's suffering presented in Mark 14-15 conveys the same answer: Jesus' suffering will achieve a redemption that will *supersede* that of the exodus event. One by one, the ritual gateways of the exodus are discarded and reinterpreted. From Passover to blood of the covenant to cultic veil, Jesus appropriates each ritual gateway to

signal that his death is the new climax of redemptive history. The message is clear: Jesus did not come to inaugurate a *new* but a *final* exodus.

Conclusion

The aim of this dissertation was to demonstrate the *prominent* and *multifaceted* use of the exodus motif in Mark. Like a musical variation on a familiar theme, the gospel draws on the exodus motif at critical points from the beginning to the end of the narrative. It is present in the opening citation, as the redemptive stage is set for the ensuing events. It is ingrained in the wilderness location, a defining feature of Mark's prologue that continues into the gospel's early chapters. It is woven into the transfiguration account, the watershed moment in the gospel as Jesus turns his back on glory and begins his march towards the cross. It provides the background to the journey along the 'way' that stretches throughout Mark's central chapters, connecting Jesus' ministry in the north of Israel to his death in Jerusalem. It functions as the theological framework for the Passion narrative, colouring the language of the only explicit interpretation that Jesus provides for his suffering in the upper room. As the gospel reaches its climax at Golgotha, it is again a concept drawn from the exodus journey that acts as a theological foil for the death of Christ. It is particularly in these final observations that this thesis has aimed to break fresh ground. The interpretation, both implicit and explicit, in most literature on this topic is that the exodus motif fades away from Mark 12 onwards. The exploration of the three 'ritual gateways' of the exodus and their central role in explicating the death of Christ has demonstrated, however, that the reverse is true.

Yet Mark's gospel is not merely a reproduction of the exodus story, couched in the language and context of first-century Palestine. Like a skilled composer, the author draws on this age-old refrain in a wide variety of ways. His multifaceted use of the exodus can be seen even on a literary level: the motif occurs in explicit citations, background topology, subtle allusions, overarching structures and narrative chronology. It is on a theological level,

however, that the diverse use of this motif can be seen most clearly. In the opening chapters, the exodus is *recapitulated*. The promise of divine guidance on the journey towards the promised land, drawn from Exodus 23:20, sets the scene for the appearance of the Baptist and the start of Jesus' ministry. As God's covenant people stream from the cities to the bank of the Jordan, humbling themselves in the waters of baptism, the clock is turned back and redemptive history is set to begin again. The wilderness once again becomes the setting for divine blessing and an intimate relationship between God and his people. Just as in the exodus, it is also the place of divine testing - although this time the outcome is not failure but the unwavering obedience of God's Son. This triumphant revival of exodus hopes is short-lived, however. As the gospel enters its central section, the exodus motif is *inverted*. A minor transposition occurs as a new emphasis on suffering emerges. The ascent of the mountain of transfiguration, the second Sinai, ends not with divine glory being enshrined but abandoned. Unlike the first exodus, there is to be no architectural embodiment of the Son's glory. The mountain leads instead to the cross, the antithesis of this spectacular theophany. The emphasis on Jesus' 'way' towards Jerusalem cements this inversion of the exodus. Although it repeatedly draws on the language of the exodus, this journey does not end in triumph but tragedy. It is structured not by promises of conquest but predictions of suffering. As the gospel reaches its climax in the Passion of Christ, the exodus motif again takes on a new form. Throughout the Passion narrative, the three ritual gateways of the exodus journey are appropriated. Stripped of their original significance, they are imbued with new meaning in light of Jesus' death. It is here, as the exodus is *superseded* by an even greater redemptive act, that the emphasis on suffering in the central chapters can finally be understood. The exodus hopes revived in the gospel's prologue and transposed in the central section are ultimately

eclipsed at the cross. This prompts one final question: what is the rhetorical effect of this prominent and multifaceted motif?

The Function of the Exodus Motif

In his 1876 essay *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, Nietzsche argued that there are three ways in which the past can be used to foster life in the present.[307] Monumental history studies the great heroes and achievements of the past, fuelling the conviction that these heights can be reached once again. Antiquarian history emphasises continuity, creating a sense of identity and community by exploring origin stories. Critical history rises above the past, giving freedom to live in the present by abolishing the old to make way for the new. These three perspectives, according to Nietzsche, are mutually exclusive. The exodus motif in Mark, however, functions in all three of these ways - and more.

It has a *monumental* function through its recollection of the exodus event. The exodus was the pinnacle of Israel's redemptive history, the archetype of divine deliverance. The revisiting of this deliverance, particularly in the opening chapters, reminds the hearer that God's mighty acts are not confined to the past. The hopes of even greater redemption that were kindled by the exodus are fanned into flame by Mark's opening citation and the evocative wilderness setting. Both serve as a reminder that this unfolding drama is not of human but divine initiative. The exodus motif also has an *antiquarian* effect, shedding light on the identity of Jesus and, by extension, his disciples. The gospel does not occur in abstract time and space, devoid of context or antecedent. The anchoring of the narrative in the exodus,

[307] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben" in *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Einzelbänden. Band 1,* ed. Giorgio Colli (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 19-44.

albeit stressing both continuity and discontinuity, compels the hearer to examine their own role as a disciple with reference to Israel's redemptive history. As will briefly be explored below, this privileging of a Jewish over a Hellenistic trope has important ramifications for the current scholarly discussion of the gospels within Judaism. The exodus in Mark also has a *critical* function. The appropriation and redefinition of exodus rituals, explored in the final chapters of this thesis, emphasises how the new eclipses the old. Dramatically expressed in the tearing of the inner veil, the most sacred cultic barrier, this gospel is not concerned merely to retrace the contours of the past. This supersession highlights the eschatological nature of this gospel message. The redemption purchased by Jesus is unique in its finality.

The function of the exodus motif extends beyond these three categories, however. It lends a *cautionary* air to the gospel. The fact that Jesus has accomplished ultimate, eschatological redemption means that no hope remains for those who reject his person and his work. The escalation of the redemption experienced in the exodus is paralleled by an escalation of the warnings given during the exodus. This emphasis on the finality of judgement permeates Mark. It can be seen, for example, in Jesus' severe warning to the scribes in Mark 3:29 that their attribution of his Spirit-empowered ministry to the devil will result in them '*never* having forgiveness'. It is anticipated in the cursing of the fig tree in Mark 11:14, symbolic of the fate of the Temple,[308] that 'no one will *ever* eat fruit from it again'. It becomes explicit in the prediction of total judgement on the Temple in Mark 13:2 as Jesus prophesies that 'there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down'.[309] The exodus motif also has an *ethical* effect. Throughout the Pentateuch, the

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[308] For an exploration of the link between the fig tree and the Temple see the section on Markan intercalations at the beginning of Chapter 6.

[309] This emphasis on judgement is consonant with other New Testament uses of the exodus motif, notably 1 Corinthians 10:1-11 and Hebrews 2:1-4, where the question is posed: 'How shall we escape if we neglect such a great [τηλικαύτης] salvation?' The increase in privilege, in other words, corresponds to an increase in danger.

exodus functions as the primary justification for Israel's social legislation. To quote Daube, 'among the deeper historical causes of the extraordinary role played by social ethics in Judaism for some three thousand years, the narrative of the exodus with its orientation towards justice deserves a foremost place.'[310] Given that the exodus gave rise to a distinctive set of ethics, then the Markan emphasis on the gospel as a new exodus event implies a new standard of ethics. This can be seen, for example, in the gospel's central section. Jesus' journey along the new exodus 'way' becomes the setting for extensive teaching on discipleship. As Jesus chooses the path of suffering, his disciples must learn that true greatness consists in service, that humility outstrips prominence. In tandem with this, the exodus motif emphasises the *participatory* nature of the gospel. Exodus 23:20, the promise at the heart of the exodus journey,[311] shows that the divine angel will guide the way towards the promised land that the people are then to follow. In the same way, Mark stresses the integral link between Jesus' redemptive work and the expectations for his followers. The way in which Jesus first preaches (Mk 1:14) and is then handed over (Mk 9:31; 10:33) becomes the pattern for his disciples, who first go out to preach (Mk 3:14) and will later be handed over (Mk 13:9-13).[312] As Mark 8:34 makes clear, discipleship requires a willingness to share both in Jesus' cross and in his self-denial. This emphasis on the participatory nature of the gospel may explain why Mark does not draw on the imagery of the promised land. All the exodus links explored in this thesis have been connected to the flight from Egypt and the wilderness years, not to the arrival in Canaan. This may correspond to the abrupt ending of Mark 16:8, the sense that this epochal event is not yet over. As Estelle comments, 'the way does not end

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[310] David Daube, *The Exodus Pattern in the Bible* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 16.
[311] For a full discussion of this verse see Chapter 1 of this thesis on the source texts of Mark's opening citation.
[312] The connection between Jesus and his disciples is explored in more detail in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

with the Messiah'.[313] The new exodus begun by the Son of God is now continued by his disciples.

Mark Within Judaism: An Avenue for Further Exploration

There is a growing scholarly interest in understanding the gospels as embedded within Second Temple Judaism. Moving away from earlier 'parting of the ways' dichotomies, the gospels are increasingly being read 'not merely against the "background" of first-century Judaism but as actually a part of its fluid and flexible fabric.'[314] The inclusion of a session on John within Judaism at the 2022 SBL conference indicates the level of current interest in this debate. Notable recent works in this vein include Willitts[315] and Runesson[316] on Matthew, Cirafesi[317] on John, and Oliver[318] on Luke. Despite differences of emphasis, these authors are in broad agreement in challenging dichotomies between Hellenism and Judaism in antiquity, questioning rigid demarcations between Judaism as nationalistic and Christianity as universalistic,[319] and stressing the embeddedness of Christianity within a 'halakically faithful, purity-observant, justice-oriented Jewish tradition'.[320] It is notable, however, that limited attention has been paid to the gospel of Mark. Whilst key purity passages such as Mark 7

[313] Bryan Estelle, *Echoes of Exodus: Tracing a Biblical Motif* (Downer's Grove: IVP, 2018), 224.
[314] Wally Cirafesi, *John Within Judaism: Religion, Ethnicity, and the Shaping of Jesus-Oriented Jewishness in the Fourth Gospel* (Boston: Brill, 2021), 285.
[315] Joel Willitts, *Matthew's Messianic Shepherd-King: In Search of 'the Lost Sheep of the House of Israel'* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007).
[316] Anders Runesson, *Matthew Within Judaism: Israel and the Nations in the First Gospel* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2020).
[317] Cirafesi, *John Within Judaism*.
[318] Isaac Oliver, *Luke's Jewish Eschatology the National Restoration of Israel in Luke-Acts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).
[319] Ibid., p. 143.
[320] Runesson, *Matthew Within Judaism,* 449.

appear in general discussions of the gospels within Judaism,[321] little systematic work has been done on Mark as a whole.[322]

The contention of this thesis, that the exodus motif is both prominent and multifaceted within Mark, is clearly relevant to this discussion. This privileging of Jewish redemptive history, coupled with the complex way in which this history is reinterpreted throughout the gospel, invites a re-examination of Mark's place in the diverse world of Second Temple Judaism. I hope to explore this line of thought further in my doctoral studies.

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[321] See, for example, the discussion of purity in: Daniel Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (New York: New Press, 2012).

[322] An unpublished PhD thesis by John R. Van Maarten entitled 'The Gospel of Mark within Judaism' (2009), supervised by Runesson at McMaster University, has taken first steps towards addressing this omission. This thesis approaches the question from a historical and sociological angle, however, focussing far more on the generic question 'What is Jewishness?' than on a close analysis of Mark. Less than a quarter of the thesis deals with the text of the gospel, and the stark conclusion that Mark shows 'little, if any, acknowledgement of inclusion of members of the nations in the expected kingdom of God' is arrived at after limited engagement with the role of Gentiles at key narrative junctures (cf. Mk 5:1-20; 7:24-29; 15:39). Whilst useful as a historical overview of Jewishness under the Hasmoneans and Romans, this study has left much work to be done on the gospel of Mark.

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