

Time Depth in Mark

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The story of the Syrophoenician Woman (Mk 7:24-30) implies that the Jesus movement did not include Gentiles (“dogs”), but Mk 13:10 says that the End will not come until the Gospel is preached “unto all the nations.” Jesus in Mk 13:7-8, 24-31 lists signs that will precede the End Time (Mk 13:7-8, 24-31), but in Mk 13:32-37 he says it will come unexpectedly, *without* warning signs. If Mark made this up, he is an incompetent storyteller. If he culled it from sources, he is an indiscriminate scavenger.

The third option is that the Gospel of Mark has time depth; that it was written over an extended period, and that the additional materials reflect new developments in Christian thought during that period. If so, then *Mark is an accretional text*, the result of a growth process which extended over years, and offers us a witness to those years. I here explore two accretional sequences, and identify the span of years in question.

1. The Gentile Mission

The following are the only mentions or hints of the Gentile Mission in Mark:

- (G1) **Mk 7:24-30** (the Syrophoenician Woman) takes the position that Gentiles may benefit, *but only incidentally*, from the healing work of Jesus.
- (G2) **Mk 5:1-20** (the Gerasene Demoniac) features a healed Gentile who offers to follow Jesus, but is told instead *to witness to his own people*.
- (G3) **Mk 8:1-9** (the Feeding of Four Thousand), a doublet of the Feeding of Five Thousand (Mk 6:34-44), accepts Gentiles (symbolized by the 7 baskets of leftovers, 7 or 70 being a universal symbol) as *of equal status with Jews*.
- (G4) **Mk 9:38-40** (the Strange Exorcist), with Hilgenfeld (1850),¹ accepts a Gentile mission (Paul) *outside the organizational control of the Twelve*, against the objections of the original Apostles (represented by John).²
- (G5) **Mk 13:10**, The End will come when “all nations” are evangelized. Gentile converts are now *essential to the plan of salvation*.³

Save perhaps for G4, no two of these can possibly reflect the same situation.

¹Hilgenfeld’s identification has not gone unchallenged. Meyer called it “exaggerated ingenuity” (p149). It was again proposed by Loisy in 1912, and again ridiculed by Rawlinson in 1925 as “too fantastic to deserve serious consideration” (p129). Cranfield in 1959 called it “fantastic” (p309). No later commentator known to me even mentions it.

²This exactly matches the enmity felt for the Twelve by Paul himself, who sneeringly calls them “pillars” (Gal 2:9), or “super-Apostles” (2 Cor 11:5, 12:11). Compare the sad 1 Cor 9:2.

³For a contrary view, see Kilpatrick **Gentile** 157, “There is no preaching to the Gentiles in this world, and there is no interest in their fate in the world to come.”

Typologically, then, the various G passages form a time sequence. There is direct evidence that G4 (Mk 9:38-40) is at least later than its immediate context:

Mk 9:37. Whosoever shall receive one of such little children in my name receiveth me, and whosoever receiveth me, receiveth not me, but him who sent me.

[38] John said unto him, Teacher, we saw one casting out demons in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followed not us. [39] But Jesus said, Forbid him not, for there is no man who shall do a mighty work in my name, and be able quickly to speak evil of me. [40] For he that is not against us is for us.

[41] For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink, because ye are Christ's, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

The thematic continuity between 9:37 and 9:41 (discipleship) is obvious;⁴ so is the interruptive character of Mk 9:38-40. It follows that Mark was not scrambled together on one occasion; rather, some passages were added after others were in place.

2. The Markan Apocalypse, Mk 13:3-37

Mark 13 has been studied by Taylor (**Mark** 636-644), who finds a whole series of answers to the question, When will the End come, each stacked on the preceding as this fundamental Christian expectation underwent disappointments and adjustments. Even *asking* the question implies doubt. Taylor notes the separateness of 13:10, but does not identify it as a layer. That it is an interpolation, and thus later, is obvious:

Mk 13:9. But take ye heed to yourselves, for they shall deliver you up to councils, and in synagogues shall ye be beaten, and before governors and kings shall ye stand for my sake, for a testimony unto them.

[10] And the Gospel must first be preached unto all the nations.

[11] And when they lead you to judgement, and deliver you up, be not anxious beforehand what ye shall speak, but whatsoever shall be given to you in that hour, that speak ye, for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Spirit. [12] And brother shall deliver up brother to death, and the father his child, and children shall rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. [13] And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake, but he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.

Mk 13:10 has nothing whatever to do with the surrounding warning on persecution, and we thus have two layers: that warning, and the requirement that the Gospel must be universally preached before the End can come. Labeling these as separate layers, and transferring a few verses to Taylor's oldest (A) layer,⁵ we have:

- (A1) **Mk 13: 5-8, 21-31** (Signs of the Parousia), **Taylor A**, augmented
- (A2) **Mk 13: 9, 11-13** (Warnings of Persecution), **Taylor B**
- (A3) **Mk 13:14-20** (The Abomination of Desolation), **Taylor C**, reduced
- (A4) **Mk 13:32-37** (No One Knows the Time), **Taylor D**, reduced
- (A5) **Mk 13:10** (The Necessity of the Gentiles), no separate label in Taylor

For an outline of how these look as successive interpolations, see the following page.

⁴So also Wellhausen (76) and Montefiore (1/220f). This and other passages here identified as "interpolations" are not scribal corruptions, since they appear in all manuscripts.

⁵Specifically, 13:21-23 from Taylor's C, and 13:28-31 from Taylor's D, to Taylor's A.

Here is the whole accretion process, with some passages slightly abbreviated:

- A1** [5] Take heed that no man lead you astray. [6] Many shall come in my name, saying "I am he" and shall lead many astray. [7] And when ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, be not troubled; these things must needs come to pass, but the End is not yet. [8] For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there shall be earthquakes in divers places; there shall be famines; these things are but the beginning of travail.
- A2** [9] But take ye heed to yourselves, for they shall deliver you up to councils, and in synagogues shall ye be beaten, and before governors and kings shall ye stand for my sake, for a testimony unto them.
- A5** [10] And the Gospel must first be preached unto all the nations.
- A2** [11] And when they lead you to judgement and deliver you up, be not anxious beforehand what ye shall speak, but whatsoever shall be given to you in that hour, that speak ye, for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Spirit. [12] And brother shall deliver up brother to death, and the father his child, and children shall raise up against parents, and cause them to be put to death. [13] And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake, but he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.
- A3** [14] But when ye see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not (let him that readeth understand), then let them that are in Judaea flee to the mountains, [15] and let him that is on the housetop not go down, nor enter in, to take anything out of his house, [16] and let him that is in the field not return back to take his cloak. [17] But woe unto those that are with child and to them that give suck in those days! [18] And pray ye that it not be in the winter. [19] For those days shall be tribulation, such as there hath not been the like from the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never shall be. [20] And except the Lord had shortened the days, no flesh would have been saved, but for the elect's sake, whom he chose, he shortened the days.
- A1** [21] And then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is the Christ, or Lo, there, believe it not. [22] For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show signs and wonders, that they may lead astray, if possible, the elect. [23] But take ye heed; behold, I have told you all things beforehand. [24] But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, [25] and the stars shall be falling from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens shall be shaken. [26] And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory [27] And then shall he send forth the angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of Heaven . . . [30] Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, until all these things be accomplished. [31] Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.
- A4** [32] But of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. [33] Take ye heed, watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is. [34] as a man, sojourning in another country, having left his house, and given authority to his servants, to each one his work, commanded also the porter to watch. [35] Watch, therefore, for ye know not when the lord of the house cometh, whether at even, or at midnight, or at cockcrowing, or in the morning, [36] lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. [37] And what I say to you I say unto all: Watch.

• All Five Mark 13 Apocalyptic Strata, A1-5 •

It thus appears that A1 simply gives the signs of cosmic upheaval that will precede the End. Then was added A2 (warning of persecutions that would precede the End), and later A3 (the Caligula threat), quickly followed by A4 (the compensation for the failed Caligula prediction, with its command to forget about signs, and just watch). The final A5, which pushed the End into the distant future, in effect canceling the previous expectation of an imminent end,⁶ was then inserted into A2.

With the Abomination passage, we come to a major crux in NT study. Does it predict the fall of Jerusalem in 70, or anticipate the sacrilege of Caligula in 40? (Caligula had ordered that his statue be worshiped in Jewish temples). The answer to this question makes a 30-year difference in the date we assign to Mark. We may recall the protest that Caligula's demand elicited. The Alexandrians (Josephus Ant 18/8:2-9) sent Philo to plead their case at Rome; Caligula's generals protested against it. Matthew identifies "abomination of desolation" as referring to Daniel (11:31, 12:11), recalling the intrusion of a "heathen altar" into the Temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 0168 (Taylor 511f), and Mark begs us to spot it ("let him that readeth understand"). All told, the Caligula interpretation thus seems literarily unproblematic.⁷

Caligula was assassinated in early 41, and the feared desecration never came off. But the failed prediction was in the text. How to deal with it? To eliminate it would admit error, and weaken the Gospel as an authority text.⁸ Instead, Mark *blunted* the earlier prediction, denying that the End would be preceded by *any signs whatsoever*; it would come unexpectedly. That denial is A4. It radically reverses the idea of signs. Instead, the End will come *without warning*, and all must be constantly in readiness.

The Caligula threat was in 40. The hope that it will not come in winter (Mk 13:18, part of A3) implies that an alternative (autumn) still existed, hence this passage may be very closely dated to the summer of 40. The passage in response to the death of Caligula, our A4, could not have been written before 41, but was then urgent, as a correction of A3. It follows that the earlier A1 and A2 predictions must predate 40, and should thus be assigned to the Thirties. This dating will presently be supported.

⁶The continued nonappearance of the End Days was obviously a problem for the Jesus sect, who prayed for it constantly (with the Aramaic Maranatha, or "Come, Lord"). Members died, and every death intensified the problem. By the end of the century, outsiders were laughing at the Jesus people for the obvious failure of their hope. 2 Peter 3:3-13, "Where is the promise of his coming? For, from that day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." The response in that text is to point out that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years." This pushes the End even further into the future. That it directly contradicts Jesus in Mk 13:30, "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away until all these things be accomplished," does not matter; the need is to save that hope *somehow*.

⁷The Gospel writers were not such fools. When one of them wants to describe the conquest of Jerusalem by Titus, the result will be more like Lk 21:20, *Luke's replacement* for Mk 13:14. For an extended discussion of the Caligula interpretation of Mk 13:14, see Crossley **Date** 27f.

⁸During its formation period, Mark's Gospel was not widely published, but was known in its immediate vicinity. Updated versions were probably circulated to those churches as they came out, much like the Epistle of Jacob (see Brooks **Jacob** for the several layers of that text). Any elimination of previously familiar material would have been noticed, and would have impugned the authority of the whole Gospel in the eyes of its early recipients.

Our next task is to identify other passages which are associated with any of these, and can be put in the same stratum, and to relate the G and A sequences to each other. For a start, the last items in each series (G5 and A5) *are the same passage*.

3. Passages Associated with the G Series

G1 (The Syrophenician Woman). The story proper is flanked by two travel passages, Mk 7:24 (to Tyre) and 7:31 (back circuitously to Galilee).⁹ We should regard these three consecutive passages as constituting one unit: Mk 7:24-31. Thus:

Mk 7:24. Journey to the vicinity of Tyre
 Mk 7:25-30. Healing the Woman's daughter
 Mk 7:31. Journey back to Galilee

G2 (The Gerasene Demoniac). In imitation (more exactly, in refutation) of the Twelve-Only Feeding of Five Thousand, this Gentiles-Also passage is associated with a sea miracle. It should probably be construed as including that miracle:

Mk 4:35-41. Stilling of the Storm (Journey to Gerasa¹⁰)
 Mk 5:1-20. Exorcism of the Gerasene Demoniac
 Mk 5:21. Journey back to Galilee

G3 (Feeding of Four Thousand). This is framed with a symmetrical pair of highly distinctive spit healings. It directly follows the story of the Syrophenician Woman:

Mk 7:32-37. Spit Healing of a Deaf Man
 Mk 8:1-9. Feeding of Four Thousand (Parallel to the Five Thousand)
 Mk 8:10. Journey to Dalmanutha
 Mk 8:11-12. Pharisees ask a Sign; they are refused¹¹
 Mk 8:13. Journey back to "the other side"
 Mk 8:14-21. Symbolism of the Baskets of Fragments Taken Up¹²
 Mk 8:22-26. Spit Healing of a Blind Man at Bethsaida

There is also a discontinuous passage which is out of context where it is, and evidently belongs with this one:

Mk 6:52 Misunderstanding the Loaves (compare 8:14-21)

G4 (The Strange Exorcist). No obviously associated passages.

G5 = A5 (All Nations). No obviously associated passages, but see at A5, below.

⁹The return itinerary has been held up to ridicule. But Jesus was a marked man, and as 1:45 tells us, after one of his healings he became generally known, and "could no more openly enter into a city [where the Roman police presence was greater], but was without in desert places." If a black activist, returning to the US from Africa, enters not at New York but through Canada, will that roundabout itinerary be laughed at by modern journalists? I suspect it will not.

¹⁰As Origen established by direct inspection, the actual locale of this incident was Gergesa. There is no harm, for present purposes, in retaining Mark's mishearing.

¹¹For this interpolation, see below.

¹²A direct comparison of the two Feeding miracles, giving away the number symbolism. That this explanation is the core of the matter is seen in the fact that the explanation is nearly as long as the Feeding narrative itself. Mk 8:15 (the Leaven of Herod) is probably an intrusion into this passage, and should be excluded for analytical purposes.

4. Passages Associated with the A Series

A1 (Signs of the End). No obviously associated passages.

A2 (Warning of Persecutions). Not distinctive; the Jesus sect had endured early persecution from the zealot Paul, and continued to do into the 2nd century. Other mentions are in 4:17 and 10:30, both of them interpolated passages, which may tentatively be associated with A2.

A3 (Caligula). No obviously associated passages.

A4 (Refusal of a Sign). The assurance (13:30) that the End will come within the lifetimes of some present is repeated in 9:1, an appendage to what precedes it; both statements are emphasized with “Verily.” Another refusal of a sign is at 8:11-12, with which 8:10 should be associated as a preliminary journey. This group was noticed above as interpolated in context; here is the relational implication.

A5 = G5 (All the Nations). No obviously associated passages. But accepting the account of Luke (in Acts), that Mark went to Antioch and later on campaign with Paul, his conviction as to the importance of Gentile converts was sincere. Then the passages, mostly parenthetical, by which he sought to adapt his text for non-Jewish hearers, will have come soon afterward, and are a Layer Z, which I date to the following year, 45.¹³ They are Mark’s final touches on his Gospel. A list¹⁴ would include:

Explanations of Jewish customs and beliefs or adaptation to non-Jews:

- 2:27. In effect abolishes Sabbath rules
- 7:3-4. Explains Jewish washing of hands and food-preparation vessels
- 7:19b. A universalizing statement, that all foods are permissible
- 12:18b. Identifies the Sadducees as not believing in resurrection
- 14:12b. Defines the First Day of Unleavened Bread as the time when the Passover lambs are sacrificed

Translations of Aramaic phrases or Semitic words:

- 3:17b. Boanerges = “sons of Thunder” [epithet of the Zebedees]
- 5:42b. Talitha cumi = “little girl, rise” [word of healing]
- 7:11b. Corban = “dedicated [to God]”
- 7:34b. Ephphatha = “be opened” [word of healing]
- 14:36b. Abba, “father”
- 15:22b. Golgotha = “the place of a skull”
- 15:34b. Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani = “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” [last words of the crucified Jesus]

Passage G1, the first grudging acceptance of Gentiles, must be later than the Twelve passages (3:13-19, 6:7-13, and 6:30, plus small phrases) and the Feeding of Five Thousand (6:31-44), since both, *with their Twelve symbolism*, imply a Jews-only movement. So also, the first Apocalyptic Answer, A1, must respond to an Apocalyptic Question, which cannot have been asked until doubt about the expectation of the End had arisen. Thus, *not even the first members* of these series are original in Mark.

¹³Not an unprecedented suggestion; Johannes Belser (*Einleitung*, 1901) gives the date 44. Mark, as an accretional text, *has no single date*; I regard Belser’s 44 as a final completion date.

¹⁴Borrowed from Brooks **Perga**.

5. Overview: Strata So Far Identified

Twelve Stratum. Mk 3:13-19, 6:7-13, and 6:30, plus small phrases; 6:31-44.

G1: 7:24-31 (Must follow any passages referring to the Twelve; see p78).

G2: 4:35-5:21.

G3: 7:32-8:9, 8:13-26, 6:52 (for the last, see p77).

G4: 9:38-40.

G5 = A5: 13:10.

A1: 13:3-8, 21-31.

A2: 13:9, 11-13.

A3: 13:14-20.

A4: 13:32-33, 8:10-12, 9:1 (Must follow the G3 stratum).

A5 = G5: 13:10.

Z: 2:27, 3:17b, 5:42b, 7:3-4, 7:11b, 7:19b, 7:34b, 12:18b, 14:12b, 14:36b, 15:22b, and 15:34b (Aramaic and other translations; Mark's final adjustments).

6. Appendix: Paul as Exorcist

The Strange Exorcist of Mk 9:38f is not an unauthorized *preacher of the Gospel*, but an unauthorized *exorcist of demons*. Did Paul exorcize? Mk 6:13 makes clear that the Twelve had power over demons: "And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them."¹⁵ We do not usually think of Paul as an exorcist, but exorcisms are deeds of power, and Paul *does* claim power:

- **1 Cor 2:4.** And my speech and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in *demonstration of the Spirit and of power*, [5] that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.¹⁶

Another self-testimony to Paul's powers is:

- **2 Cor 12:12.** Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, *by signs and wonders and mighty works*.

Paul also claims this power as available to others, as a working of the Spirit:

- **1 Cor 12:7.** But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit to profit withal. [8] For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom and to another the word of knowledge . . . [10] and to another *workings of miracles*, and to another prophecy, and to another discernings of spirits . . .

"Miracles" will cover the required territory. The match seems sufficiently good.¹⁷

¹⁵Anointing with oil does not figure in the healings of Jesus in Mark, but is recommended for the elders of the local churches in Jacob 5:14 (for the date of this text, see Brooks **Jacob**). Together with wine, an antiseptic, it is applied to a wounded man by the Good Samaritan. For parallels between Jacob and the Two Ways text preserved in the Didache, see Brooks **Two**. These two early documents in part inhabit the same time frame as the letters of Paul; indeed, the final stratum of Jacob directly and sarcastically contests Paul's theology of atonement.

¹⁶This is orthodox teaching; the healings and exorcisms of Jesus are regularly ascribed to the power of God (eg Mk 5:19, "tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee").

¹⁷Acts 16:16 shows Paul exorcising a "pythonic" spirit (a spirit of prophecy), but this might be Lukan invention based on Paul's letters. For Luke's knowledge of Paul, see Walker **Acts**.

7. Conclusion

Mark is early and accretional. Its earliest layers predate Paul; one late layer is contemporary with him, and attests his independent preaching.

Two fixed dates are the A3 response to the Caligula threat in (40), and the A4 response to its nonoccurrence (41). A third is the prediction of the death of Jacob and/or John Zebedee in Mk 10:35-45. The death of Jacob, as told by Luke in Acts, was in retaliation for the liberal ruling given to the Antioch deputation; that ruling in effect eliminated the dietary laws, considered essential by the Temple authorities. The death of Herod Agrippa I, who attacked the Christian leaders to please his Jewish subjects, was seen as punishment for this persecution.¹⁸

The date of Herod's death was 44, probably the same year as the persecution. Mark's last adjustments may reasonably be ascribed to the next year, 45. At that point, his Gospel was complete, and it remained only to distribute it more widely.

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¹⁸For the dates, unraveled from the Acts/Galatians accounts (another famous crux in New Testament scholarship), see Beare **Sequence**.