

## The Resurrection of Jesus in Mark

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I have noted elsewhere<sup>1</sup> that Mark includes material of different date. Some passages there considered proved to be part of larger strata. I here take up another set of passages which cohere in that way: those which predict or describe Jesus' bodily resurrection after three days in the tomb. Surprisingly, there are only five of them:

- Three recognized Passion Predictions, Mk 8:31–33, 9:31b–32, 10:32b–34<sup>2</sup>
- A less often recognized fourth Passion Prediction, Mk 9:9b–13
- The Empty Tomb story, the whole ending of extant Mark, 15:40–16:8

There are signs that these are interpolated and thus late in Mark: that the story of the Resurrection – the Empty Tomb story – is a later theory and not a historical memory. At the end, I ask, Does Mark also preserve an *earlier* account of Jesus' death?

### The Four Passion Predictions

These can be removed without damage to context. So can many passages in Mark. More important, they *interrupt* or *contradict* their context. Here is a contradiction:

**Mk 8:27.** And Jesus went forth, and his disciples, into the villages of Caesarea Philippi, and on the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Who do men say that I am? [28] And they told him, saying, John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but others, One of the prophets. [29] And he asked them, But who say ye that I am? Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. [30] And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.

[31] And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. [32] And he spake the saying openly. And Peter took him and began to rebuke him. [33] But he turning about, and seeing his disciples, rebuked Peter, and saith, Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men.

In Mk 8:27f Peter acclaims Jesus as the Christ (Messiah), the coming King of Israel. In 8:31-33, he hears Jesus' prediction of his coming death, and rejects it.

The word "Christ" (Anointed) evokes the national Messiah of Psalm 2:2 (a passage quoted about Jesus in Mk 1:11). Peter had expected a living King; he got suffering and death instead. *This is a radical reversal of expectation.* No wonder he protested.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Brooks **Time**.

<sup>2</sup>No others are considered, for instance, in Strecker **Predictions** 1968.

<sup>3</sup>For this common literary device of objection *within the story*, in which the objection of current readers is projected back into the story, and there answered, see Brooks **Reader**.

And here is an interruption:

**Mk 9:30.** And they went forth from thence, and passed through Galilee, [31a] and he would not that any man should know it.

[31b] For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of Man is delivered up into the hands of men, and they shall kill him, and when he is killed, after three days he shall rise again. [32] But they understood not the saying, and were afraid to ask him.

[33] And they came to Capernaum, and when he was in the house he asked them, What were ye reasoning on the way? [34] But they held their peace, for they had disputed one with another on the way, who was the greatest. [35] And he sat down, and called the Twelve, and he saith unto them, If any man would be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all.

So, what happened? Either (1) the disciples argued who was the greatest, a discussion unheard by Jesus, who has to ask them; or (2) Jesus taught them about his death and resurrection, in which case he knows what happened, and the 9:33 question is absurd.

The absurdity can be cured by the removal of the middle passage; that is, 31b-32 is interruptive. In context, it is also inconsistent: 9:33f implies an earthly kingdom over which Jesus rules, and in which he has favors to dispense, whereas 31b-32 instead implies an earthly death of Jesus, leading to a Resurrection, not to an earthly realm. *These cannot be part of the same perception of Jesus.* Then 31b-32 is inconsistent as well as interruptive. These are standard signs of an interpolation.

In the next example, I omit Mk 10:35-45, the request of the Zebedees for preferred positions in the Kingdom. This is a remake of Mk 9:34-35, above, and amounts to predicting the death of Jacob Zebedee, a prediction which was fulfilled in early 44, when, as Acts 12:1-3 tells us, he was killed by Agrippa I, a response to his and other leaders' authorizing Gentile commensality. It is the latest datable passage in Mark.

With that adjustment, the rest of the context reads as follows:

**Mk 10:32a.** And they were on the way, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was before them, and they were amazed, and they that followed were afraid.

[10:32b] And he took again the Twelve and began to tell them the things that were to happen unto him, [33] saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and they shall deliver him unto the Gentiles, [34] and they shall mock him, and shall spit upon him, and shall scourge him, and shall kill him, and after three days he shall rise again.

[46] And they come to Jericho, and as he went out from Jericho, with his disciples and a great multitude, the son of Timaeus, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the wayside. [47] And when he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me . . .

Again the Davidic touch. If the Jesus party were on their way to attempt something daring in the Temple, the disciples' fear is intelligible, along with their awe of Jesus, whom they will have regarded as the Anointed One, the foreseen and present Messiah. The party in 10:32a (and 46) is large, but in 10:32b, Jesus speaks *only to his disciples*. That contrast is another detail tending to separate 10:32a from 10:32b and following.

The above are the usual Three Passion Predictions. The less noticed fourth is:

**Mk 9:2.** And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter and Jacob and John, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves, and he was transfigured before them, [3] and his garments became glistening, exceeding white, so as no fuller on earth can whiten them. [4] And there appeared unto them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. [5] And Peter answereth and saith to Jesus, Rabbi, it is good for us to be here, and let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah. [6] For he knew not what to answer, for they became sore afraid. [7] And there came a cloud overshadowing them, and there came a voice out of the cloud, This is my beloved Son, hear ye him. [8] And suddenly looking round about, they saw no one any more, save Jesus only with themselves. [9a] And as they were coming down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen.

[9b] save when the Son of Man should have risen again from the dead. [10] And they kept the saying, questioning among themselves what the “rising again from the dead” would mean. [11] And they asked him, saying, How is it that the scribes say that Elijah must first come? [12] And he said unto them, Elijah indeed cometh first, and restoreth all things, and how is it written of the Son of Man, that he should suffer many things and be set at nought? [13] But I say unto you, that Elijah is come, and they have also done unto him whatsoever they would, even as it is written of him.

[14] And when they came to the disciples . . .

Mk 9:9a is a perfectly satisfactory ending to the mysterious vision of Jesus on the mountain. Mk 9:14 picks up the narrative of the descent from the mountain, and continues with the story of the epileptic boy. Mk 9b-13, coming between, is intrusive, and thus, by the standard criterion which we are here applying, is also later in date.

Mk 9:2-9a is a vision of Jesus transfigured. The presence of Moses and Elijah has two meanings. First, Moses was important to Jesus in his legislative role (in opposition to the Pharisees)<sup>4</sup> and Elijah to his Messianic role (in contemporary thought, Elijah was the chief prophet of the Messiah); they symbolize the Law and the Prophets, the tradition which Jesus had purged of Pharisaic legal overgrowth and reoriented along Minor Prophet lines, and sought to bring about on earth. Second, both were regarded (Moses in the noncanonical Assumption of Moses;<sup>5</sup> Elijah in 2 Kings 2:11) as having ascended direct to Heaven at their death, without suffering the corruption of burial. The implication is that Jesus has indeed died – in contrast with the pure Messianic expectation seen in the above passages – but was not buried at all. Quite the contrary, he has ascended direct to Heaven, as had Moses and Elijah. This minority tradition we will meet again, in material to be considered below.

<sup>4</sup>See, for example, Jesus’ accusation in Mk 7:9-13, that the Pharisees contravene the law of Moses with their own legal extensions and contrivances.

<sup>5</sup>Montefiore 2/207 has seen, if not exploited, the relevance of these texts to this passage. For the assumption of Moses in later Judaism, see Josephus Ant 4/48:323-326, which even deals with the contradiction with the canonical tradition of Moses’ death (Deut 24:5f). The idea of Moses’ assumption may be a popular development from the clouds which envelop Moses when he talks to God. For references to the rabbinic literature, see Vermes **Jesus** 186f.

### The Empty Tomb

Mk 15:40–16:8, the Empty Tomb, fulfils the Resurrection predictions, and probably belongs to the same layer. It depicts Jesus' burial and his bodily Resurrection after three days. It has been challenged as a later addition. Grant in 1943 (p179) argued that Mark originally ended with the centurion's acknowledgement of Jesus as Son of God in Mk 15:39. Kirby 2002 notes that the Parable of the Vineyard, Mk 12:1-12, depicts Jesus' fate as having his body tossed out of the city and buried in an unmarked grave. Yarbrow Collins 2007 argues on other grounds for the absence of the Empty Tomb story in what she calls the Pre-Markan Passion Narrative; which she ends at Mk 15:38.<sup>6</sup> These arguments agree with the above finding, that the Passion Predictions are secondary in Mark. So the tradition of Jesus' Resurrection after Three Days does indeed exist in Mark, *but only in passages which seem to be later additions to the text.*

### The Deaths of Jesus

If the Resurrection After Three Days is a later development within Christianity,<sup>7</sup> how *did* the life of Jesus end? We have seen that other ideas of Jesus' end are envisioned in Mark: the earlier expectations to which the repeated Passion Predictions are juxtaposed, *as though they were intentional correctives of what precedes them:*

- Mk 8:27-30. **Messiah Expectation** / Mk 8:31-33. Resurrection Correction
- Mk 9:30, 33f. **Messiah Expectation** / Mk 9:31b-32. Resurrection Correction
- Mk 10:32a. **Messianic Argument** / Mk 10:32b-34. Resurrection Correction
- Mk 9:2-9a. **Jesus in Heaven** / Mk 9:9b-13. Resurrection Correction

The Messiah Expectation did not come off, and Jesus was crucified as a failed candidate for the title "King of the Jews." The other option to which the Burial and Resurrection predictions stand opposed is the Jesus who ascended direct to Heaven. As above noted, the vision of Mk 9:2-9a links Jesus with persons believed to have ascended to Heaven at the time of their deaths. That tradition survives in Luke, when Jesus address the Repentant Thief:

- **Lk 23:43.** "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

This contradicts the rest of Luke's Passion story, and is probably not a late innovation. It more likely reflects an early tradition which had become secure in popular affection.

These two options may be combined as follows: Jesus died as a disappointed national Messiah, but ascended direct to Heaven at his death, to return in glory later.

### The Davidic Messiah

How could anyone write an account of Jesus that ends with his failure as Messiah? *Yet this is what Mark does.*<sup>8</sup> The only credible answer is that this is what happened:

<sup>6</sup>She ends the "Pre-Markan Passion Narrative" at 15:38, the Rending of the Veil. I see no difference, other than nomenclature, between "Pre-Markan" and a label such as "Mark A."

<sup>7</sup>In context, part of a general divinization process; see Brooks **Four** 11.

<sup>8</sup>Still agreeing with Yarbrow Collins **Mark** 819 that the Gospel originally ended at Mk 15:38.

Notice how much of that outcome survives in Mark:

- **Mk 2:25-28.** Jesus invokes the example of David to justify plucking the grain
- **Mk 4:1-9, 21-33.** Jesus preaches the coming Kingdom in veiled terms<sup>9</sup>
- **Mk 10:47.** Blind Bartimaeus calls on “Jesus, thou Son of David” to heal him
- **Mk 11:1-10.** Jesus’ disciples stage his entry into Jerusalem so as to evoke Zech 9:9 (“riding on an ass”); the crowd acclaims “the Kingdom of David”
- **Mk 11:11.** Jesus and his party inspect the Temple and return to their lodging
- **Mk 11:15, 17.** Jesus purifies the Temple by driving out the moneychangers (it was at the Temple that God was expected to return to Israel; Mal 3:1)
- **Mk 11:16.** Jesus’ party prevent commercial access to the Temple grounds
- **Mk 12:35-37.** He argues that the Messiah need *not* be a descendant of David<sup>10</sup>
- **Mk 15:2.** Jesus acknowledges his intent before Pilate (“You have said so”)
- **Mk 15: 9, 12, 18, 32.** Jesus is mocked by Jews and Romans as a Messianic pretender, “the King of the Jews [or Israel]”
- **Mk 15:26.** The inscription on the Cross reads, “King of the Jews”
- **Mk 15:34.** Jesus dies feeling that he has been abandoned by God

There is also the passage where Jesus’ friends think him demented:

**Mk 3:19b.** And he cometh into a house. [20] And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. [21] And when his friends heard it, they went out to lay hands on him, for they said, He is beside himself.

[22] And the scribes that came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and, By the Prince of Demons casteth he out the demons . . . [30] because they had said, He hath an unclean spirit.

[31] And there come his mother and his brethren, and, standing without, they sent unto him, calling him. [32] And a multitude was sitting about him, and they say unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. [34] And looking round on them that sat round about him, he saith, Behold, my mother and my brethren! [35] For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

If Jesus had become convinced of his Davidic Messiah role, the concern of his friends and family for his sanity was entirely justified. We might thus add Mk 3:19b-21 and 31-35 to the list of Davidic passages in Mark.

Now notice the pattern of Mk 3:22-30, “scribes from Jerusalem.” The theme is interruptive (not Jesus’ sanity, but his being in league with Satan). Further, it is also situationally at odds with its context.<sup>11</sup> If we remove it, the concern of Jesus’ family and friends join to make a consistent story. Here too, a Davidic passage is interrupted by *something else*, and the implication is that the Davidic passage is the earlier.

<sup>9</sup>For the Mark 4 parables, see further Brooks **Parables**.

<sup>10</sup>Popular tradition soon supplied Jesus with Davidic credentials (Mt 1:1f, Lk 3:23f).

<sup>11</sup>Johannes Weiss puts it neatly. “3:20 geht Jesus in ein Haus, 3:31-35 ist die Scene im Hause gedacht, wo aber sind die γραμματεῖς 3:22? auch im Hause?” (**Älteste** 165).

**Another Interpolation.** Consider also the two endings to the story of Plucking Grain on the Sabbath. No story needs two endings; which one is the original? Jesus' defense of his disciples' actions consists of a citation of a Davidic precedent, when David and those with him, being in need, entered the House of God and ate the Bread of the Presence, "and gave also to them that were with him" (see 1 Sam 21:1-6). As the conclusion to that statement, we have these two possibilities:

- **Mk 2:27.** And he said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.
- **Mk 2:28.** So that the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.

Of the two, it is 2:28, the Son of Man passage (notice the link ὥστε "so that," as in a logical demonstration), that connects with what precedes, and is the proper ending.

The other argument against 2:27 is textual: it is missing in Matthew and Luke, and also in Codex Bezae. A similar situation was noticed by Westcott and Hort for nine passages which they call "Western Non-Interpolations:" early additions to the good ancestor of Codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, but absent in the even better ancestor behind Bezae. Mk 2:28 is not among the Westcott/Hort list of Nine, but it qualifies by their criteria. Besides, if the universalistic 2:27 were original, it is hard to see why it would have been omitted by copyists, but easy to see why it might have been added by a scribe as a wider remake of the narrow Davidic argument. It is then the Davidic ending which is original, and the universal one which is later.

The Messianic Expectation survives in Luke. A disciple asks the risen Jesus,

**Ac 1:6.** Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?

. . . as if Jesus' death were a mere delay in his Messianic program. In Ac 1:7, Jesus fobs them off: that is no longer a proper subject for discussion. And why is it not? Because *the movement's theory of its leader has moved on*, as Ac 1:8 spells out.

### The Direct Ascent

This is the other model which the Resurrection predictions oppose. Of what did it consist? From Mark and other texts, we learn that Jesus' disciples fled at his arrest, and returned to Galilee. Then one of them, probably Peter,<sup>12</sup> had a vision of Jesus in Heaven; the Jesus movement had a rationale for continuing. It was at that moment that Christianity began. This vision *was unexpected*, as in the two stories which show Peter and others back in Galilee and going fishing, *without any thought* of seeing Jesus.<sup>13</sup> Matthew's completion (Mt 28:15-20) of Mark's mutilated ending<sup>14</sup> has the Eleven (minus Judas) go to Galilee, "unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them." This mountain vision may be derived from the mountain vision of Mk 9:2-8.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup>So Paul (or his editors) in 1 Cor 15:5.

<sup>13</sup>One version is in Jn 21, a later addition to that Gospel; the other is the conclusion to the incompletely preserved Gospel of Peter (Elliott 158).

<sup>14</sup>That the present ending of Mark is defective is implied by scribal attempts (not to mention that of Matthew) to supply it. See Metzger **Textual** at Mk 16:9-20, and n19 below.

<sup>15</sup>First suggested by Wellhausen **Marci** 71.

The other suggestive point is that some stories of the bodily resurrected Jesus include incidents in which he also appears or disappears like a spirit. In Lk 24:13-31, the risen Jesus is recognized by two companions as he breaks bread (as though to eat, a proof of physicality), *but then immediately vanishes*. In Lk 24:36-37, Jesus *suddenly appears* to the disciples, and does in fact eat, but later, outside the city, he suddenly “*was carried up to Heaven*” (24:51). This oscillating mixture might result from the overlay of a later tradition (the tangible Jesus) on an earlier one (the spiritual Jesus).

It is easy to see how the idea of the bodily return of Jesus might have arisen. A claim of a body touched is stronger than a claim of a vision seen, and might have been added to strengthen the Resurrection claim.<sup>16</sup> Since resurrection on the Sabbath would offend Jewish sensibilities, a three-day interval is needed (crucified on Friday, remaining buried on Saturday, bodily risen on Sunday), perhaps with support from the story of Jonah.<sup>17</sup> Finally, the reappearance of Jesus in Jerusalem (rather than Galilee, as had been predicted in Mk 14:28 and in Mk 16:7), fits the Jerusalemizing tendency which may be seen in all the Gospels.<sup>18</sup> Of these conflicting accounts, the spiritual and the bodily resurrection, the bodily resurrection version, with its Jerusalem associations, is thus probably the later.

Mark actually narrates neither the Galilee vision nor the Jerusalem Resurrection. Instead, the Gospel breaks off at a narratively and grammatically impossible place.<sup>19</sup> If the story had continued after 16:8, it would have told of the bodily Resurrection in Jerusalem, and ended (as Mk 14:28 predicts) with Peter’s vision of Jesus in Galilee.

Which of these two mutually incompatible outcomes was earlier in Mark? To that, there can be only one philologically satisfactory answer. Since the predictions of the Galilee appearance are *interpolated into* the story of the Jerusalem appearance, it is inevitable that the Jerusalem appearance, the Empty Tomb story, was added first, and that the Galilee vision, was added still later, in a position at the end of the text. Since the Gospel of Mark shows many signs of being a Jerusalem production (the Gospel is precise and detailed about events occurring in or near Jerusalem, including the passwords of the Jesus party as they staged the Entry Into Jerusalem or arranged a place for the party to eat the Passover; and the names of some persons present at the Crucifixion, *and their children*, but vague about names of persons or the sequence of events in distant Galilee), it is plausible that, at one point in the evolution of the text, the Jerusalem version of the Resurrection was the last thing in the Gospel.

<sup>16</sup>Even the bodily-resurrection claim was to be challenged, as we see in Mt 27:62-68.

<sup>17</sup>Mt 16:4 adds “Jonah” to Mk 8:12; see also Mt 12:38-42 || Lk 11:29-32.

<sup>18</sup>See Brooks **Four** 12.

<sup>19</sup>Knox **Ending** (1942) 22, “To suppose that Mark originally intended to end his Gospel in this way implies both that he was totally indifferent to the canons of popular story-telling, and that by pure accident he happened to hit on a conclusion which suits the technique of a highly sophisticated type of modern literature. The odds against such a coincidence . . . seem to me to be so enormous as not to be worth considering.” Manson **Studies** (1962) 30, “while ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ may conceivably be the end of a sentence, it cannot well be the end of a Gospel, or even of a paragraph. We must suppose that the end of the Gospel is lost, and that the additional verses which appear in our manuscripts are attempts to repair the damage.”

### Summary

We find that the material in Mark tells more than one story of the death of Jesus. If taken in the sequence indicated by the interpolation evidence, the Davidic stratum (ending at 15:38) preceded the Resurrection stratum, and this in turn was followed by an account of the Galilee vision. What has happened to produce this situation?

(1) The vision of Peter, back in Galilee, saved the Jesus movement from extinction in the wake of Jesus' unanticipated death. Jesus *was still in existence*, and in Heaven; not buried in the earth. The vision of Mk 9:2-9a, as above noted, in which Jesus appears with earlier figures who had also ascended direct to Heaven on their death, and never seen burial and corruption, is Mark's first version of the Galilee vision, placed *at the center* and not the end of his story. (2) Impressed by the later idea of a Jerusalem Resurrection, Mark of Jerusalem *adds it to the end of his text*. (3) Still later, he adds an account of the Galilee vision at the end of his text, and inserts predictions of that episode (Mk 14:28 and 16:7) into his account of the Jerusalem Resurrection. (4) For whatever reason, this new ending does not survive in the final canonical text.

Many locations have been proposed for Mark, but I venture to add one more:

Mark is the Jerusalem Gospel.

The idea of Jesus' death in the seemingly oldest strata of Mark, which attach no theological importance to it, agrees with the early belief to which I have elsewhere<sup>20</sup> given the name Alpha Christianity, a belief which makes no use of the Resurrection, or of any other theory based on Jesus' death.

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<sup>20</sup>Brooks **Two** 35.