CHRISTOLOGY OF MARK’S PASSION NARRATIVE
The Portrait of Jesus through Narrative Criticism

by
Rodrigo Rivero Gutiérrez, O.P.

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Director: Anthony O'Leary.

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INTRODUCTION

This approach to Mark’s gospel will focus on its literary characteristics as an entry point to the essential theological issues. We are taking Mark’s Gospel as a theological document, and not going back to the historical references of the story. To do this we will look at literary criticism which “has developed methods to analyze the formal features of narrative, such as the role of the narrator, point of view, style, plot, settings and characters.”¹ The gospel of Mark is a piece of literature with deeply significant relationships; Its framework has multi-faceted literary connections and if we can discover them, we can uncover information about Mark’s implied readers as well as the portrait of Jesus he presents. Once we have decided to apply the method of narrative criticism to Mark’s passion narrative, we look primarily for internal meaning rather than external meaning. A movement from historical to literary questions gives us a new paradigm, a new way of understanding things, a way of comprehending the Christology in Mark’s gospel.

From the context of the whole Bible, we isolate Mark’s gospel as an independent book which tells us a story, a story-as-discoursed. Whoever had written the gospel, ² is not just a collector of sentences, fairy tales and ideas about Jesus. The author has not simply collected and organized traditions, he has not limited his work by adding summaries. Mark’s author is not a robot who does a mechanical work for the pleasure of others and his own convenience. He is no longer a “cut-and-paste

editor.” Indeed the author of the gospel of Mark has been the collector and editor of this gospel but his work has gone further. He has also told a story, tinged with dramatic, realistic and controversial scenes, a story with characters, places and events. He can be called a real ‘author’ inasmuch as he has control over the story he narrates. He is a ‘storyteller’ but he tells the same story differently. He tells it in his own way, since he has to make it personal and not simply a mechanical repetition of what he has heard or narrated before. “He becomes not only a ‘repeater’ but also a ‘creative’ originator of each story.” The core of the story with its characters remains the same, but the “narrator has to supply flesh to this skeleton. The narrator puts his personality into the story. This he will do in the choice of words, the speed of reciting, the imagery he uses, the varying of his voice, the gestures.” It means that “the Jesus of Mark is no longer a shadowy historical personage but a lively character. Galilee and Jerusalem are no longer simply geographical references but settings for dramatic action.” The account of Jesus’ passion, his suffering and death, is the culmination of a dramatic and engaging plot and so may become the source of theological doctrine. Theology is linked to the plot’s expression. We need to read Mark’s gospel more carefully as a “self-sufficient” story. Our reading has to be slow and thorough since “we cannot use the other gospels to fill out or to fill in some unclear passages in Mark’s story.”

Narrative criticism uses characteristics and traits of Mark’s Gospel. Once we apply these elements to the Passion Narrative according to Mark, the result is going to be interesting and to show different aspects to the other gospels, especially in their

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5 Ibid., 502.
6 Malbon, In the company of Jesus, 1.
7 Rhoads et al., Mark as Story, 4.
Christologies, giving us an answer to our question: What is the portrait of Jesus in Mark’s Passion Narrative?
CHAPTER 1

NARRATIVE CRITICISM

1. Implied author.

As we know narrative criticism focuses on the narrative, its elements and features, “but the implied author is understood as an aspect of the narrative.”¹ Who is this particular implied author of Mark’s gospel? If we want to figure him out, we must search for the salient features of Mark’s narrator because the implied author is a “hypothetical construction based on the requirements of knowledge and belief presupposed in the narrative.”² There is no difference at all between implied author and narrator who may be characterized as omniscient and omnipresent.

He is omniscient. He knows “past, present and future.”³ Further, he sets out ‘inside views’ of the characters’ minds, his knowledge goes further displaying “full omniscience by narrating the thoughts, feelings, or sensory experiences of many characters.”⁴ He knows so much that the “implied reader/hearer may trust him as a non-deceptive guide to the action and safely believe that what he foreshadows will be fulfilled.”⁵ Mark’s implied author/narrator, in his omniscience, speaks to the reader through ‘asides’. For example, when the narrator is presenting the selection of the twelve apostles, he deliberately left Judas to the end and said about him “Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him” (3:19). It shows us that generally the implied author/narrator “addresses the reader directly, making comments or explanations

² Ibid., 7.
³ Ibid., 7.
⁴ Ibid., 36.
which do not figure as part of the events themselves and encourages the reader to accept other judgments the narrator makes about events and characters in the course of narration.”\(^6\) He makes explicit and implicit comments everywhere.

He is omnipresent. Although Mark’s narrator “does not figure in the events of the story nor speak in the third person,”\(^7\) he is tacitly present because “he knows what happens in every place; he can depict not only public events but also what happens privately in houses. He is an implied invisible presence in every scene, capable of being anywhere to ‘recount’ the action.”\(^8\) In Gethsemane (14:32-42), for example, the implied author/narrator is able to narrate Jesus’ prayer although Jesus was alone. It demonstrates that the implied author/narrator is not bound by time or space. That is why he arranges the order of events and he arranges it in a non chronological order. Mark’s author/narrator uses prophecy, a technique of foreshadowing events, which “enables him to end the story in a powerful and enigmatic way and leads the reader to look back over the story and to reconsider earlier events in the narrative.”\(^9\) And when he is doing so, he controls distance. “He establishes a relationship with the reader which is different from the relationship the narrator engenders between the reader and the characters.”\(^10\) On the one hand, there is a friendly and good relationship between the narrator and reader; on the other hand, there is a distant and aggressive tension between the reader and the characters, with the exception of Jesus. Elsewhere the narrator “withholds important information from the reader so

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\(^6\) Rhoads et al., *Mark as Story*, 36.
\(^7\) Ibid., 37.
\(^8\) Ibid., 37.
\(^9\) Ibid., 42.
\(^10\) Ibid., 38.
that the reader learns it at the same time as some of the characters do, through the dialogue."\(^{11}\)

The implied author/narrator, characterized as omniscient and omnipresent, "speaks from an ideological point of view."\(^{12}\) A point of view in a narrative is expressed in two ways; one way is through "the mental actions or emotional states of mind such as thinking, feeling or experiencing of the characters."\(^{13}\) And the other way is when the implied author/narrator judges and evaluates the characters and even the events in the story. Through these ways he is exposing his own values and beliefs in a tacit manner. David Rhoads and Donald Michie, narrative critics, propose the theory that among the characters of the Markan story world there consistently seem to be only two basic ideological points of view, two mentalities represented: "Thinking the things of God" and "Thinking the things of men".\(^{14}\) We can see this for example in Jesus discussion with Peter and all the disciples, "Get behind me, Satan, because you're not thinking God's thoughts but human thoughts" (8:33). And with these two ideological points of view we can reach the implied author/narrator of Mark, because as soon as he establishes Jesus as a reliable character, his own values are conveyed through Him. Even more, the implied author/narrator "is aligned not only with the point of view of the main character, Jesus, but also with the point of view of God."\(^{15}\) Readers are led to judge all the other points of view in the story by "suspending their own values and accepting the narrator's ideological assumptions without being aware of so doing."\(^{16}\)

\(^{11}\) Ibid., 41.
\(^{12}\) Ibid., 39.
\(^{13}\) Ibid., 43.
\(^{14}\) Ibid., 37.
\(^{15}\) Malbon, In the Company of Jesus, 7.
\(^{16}\) Rhoads et al., Mark as Story, 39.
2. Characters, the “who” of the narrative.

A story, whatever it is, has characters, who act. The characters can be brought to life for “the implied reader by the implied author through narrating words and actions.”\textsuperscript{17} This process is called ‘characterization’.\textsuperscript{18} It can be by ‘telling’ or by ‘showing’. A narrator may ‘tell’ the reader directly what characters are like or a narrator may ‘show’ the characters to the reader by having them speak and act and this “requires more from the implied reader and is thus more engaging.”\textsuperscript{19} It means that characters in Mark’s Gospel can be known by actions and dialogues, by their sayings and doings, and more specifically, by what the narrator says about them directly or by what the implied author says about them indirectly through what other characters say to or about them.

All those characters are charged with attributes, particular traits or personal qualities that persist over time. David Rhoads and Donald Michie say that “we may assess on a continuum whether a character is complex (with many traits) or simple (having few traits).”\textsuperscript{20} Literary critics call the first kind of characters, with many traits, ‘round’ because they are complex or dynamic. They may reveal new aspects of themselves or even change. There are characters like that in Mark’s Gospel such as the disciples and the Markan Jesus himself. Literary critics call the second kind of characters, with few traits, ‘flat’ because they are simple and regular, some of them appear just once, others many times, but they do not change at all, and are rather predictable in their behaviour. And there are characters like that in Mark’s Gospel as well, such as the Jewish leaders (14:1-2) and the anointing woman (14: 3-11).

\textsuperscript{17} Malbon, \textit{In the Company of Jesus}, 9.
\textsuperscript{18} Cf. Rhoads et al., \textit{Mark as Story}, 98.
\textsuperscript{19} Malbon, \textit{In the Company of Jesus}, 10.
\textsuperscript{20} Rhoads et al., \textit{Mark as Story}, 98.
3. Settings, the “where” and “when” of the narrative.

Settings provide for the narrative the place and the time to develop the actions and dialogues. We may be confused by these spatial and temporal settings. If we interpret them literally we could make a huge mistake and think that the text sometimes lies to us. Narrative critics, however, interpret them “internally rather than externally.”\(^{21}\) This ‘internal interpretation’ is done when we interpret the settings from the information that is contained within the text, rather than going to other information outside the text itself. Spatial and temporal settings are often full of meanings which help to understand in a deeper manner the story they are recounting to us.

Markan spatial settings help the readers to get the picture. Some spatial references are clearly symbolic. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon provides us with the following example. “The Markan narrator says that Jesus ‘went up the mountain’ (3:13) to appoint the twelve. Historical critics have searched in vain for a mountain in Galilee. But for the implied author and implied reader, who know their Bible, ‘the mountain’ is where God comes to meet leaders of the people of God.”\(^{22}\) Spatially, everything becomes more specific in Mark’s Passion Narrative. Instead of “in the house”, we find “at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, at the table” (14:3). The intention of this peculiar “specification” is to suggest the profound significance of a climaxing series of scenes. “These are the implied author’s plea to the implied reader: Slow down, take this in, you must understand this. It is a form of urgency.”\(^{23}\)

Markan temporal settings also help the readers to a better appreciation of the narrative. The tempo is important because it varies the pace of narration rather than

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\(^{21}\) Malbon, *In the Company of Jesus*, 12.  
\(^{22}\) Ibid., 12.  
\(^{23}\) Ibid., 14-15.
be allusive as the spatial setting is. Sometimes the tempo is very fast, sometimes it is suspended for a brief descriptive pause and sometimes the tempo just slows down. For example, “early in the narrative, the action shifts rapidly from one location to another, while the end of the journey slows to a day-by-day description of what happens in the single location of Jerusalem and then to a sustained almost hour-by-hour depiction of the crucifixion.”24 Story time ‘before’ the Passion Narrative is summarized in the first ten chapters, but story time ‘in’ the Passion Narrative, the last six chapters of the Gospel, is about just one week. Both timing and location become more specific in Mark’s Passion Narrative. For example, instead of the “in those days” of the first ten chapters, we now read “two days before the Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread” (14:1) or “nine o’clock in the morning” (15:25). Mark’s Passion Narrative is such an excited story that it is necessary to just slow the whole thing down. And when Mark’s narrator slows his story down, it looks even more spectacular because slowing the pace down intensifies the story itself.

4. Discourse as the “how” of the Narrative.

Mark’s Gospel presents the story of Jesus Christ. It is not a biography, but instead is a living story without end, a story with many events and dialogues. The literary composition of Mark’s Gospel may be discovered by his use of materials such as Jesus’ sentences and the stories or by compositional traits.

Two aspects of Jesus’ speeches in Mark’s Gospel strike the reader: “The brevity of the speeches and the frequent mention of them. There are only two speeches in Mark: Discourses in parables (4:1-34) and the eschatological discourse (13)”.25 To

24 Rhoads et al., Mark as Story, 47.
use a culinary analogy, if we were to eat these speeches, they would be like raw meat because they are not well cooked, nor well developed. Stories in Mark’s Gospel are different from the speeches. The difference is that the stories, unlike the speeches, are developed. Mark devotes more space to “stories about Jesus mighty acts than any other gospel.”

For example, in the different kinds of stories, there are some very short ones, such as the temptation of Jesus (1:12), “but others really well developed as the resurrection of Jairus’ daughter (5:21-43).”

Mark’s implied author/narrator tells the stories or narrates events with two different methods: Analepsis and Prolepsis.

When he narrates “events ‘after’ its logical order” in the narrative world, he is doing so through the analeptic method. It is like a flash-back, sometimes used to understand why the present things are like that. An astonishing example appears in Mark’s passion narrative, when the narrator says that there were also women looking on from a distance at the crucified Jesus, and after naming them, he mention “many other women” (15:40), who “followed Jesus in Galilee and saw to his needs” (15:41).

This example is astonishing because Mark’s author/narrator waited until the final event of the story to tell us that Jesus had other followers, even more, women followers.

When he narrates “events ‘before’ its logical order” in the narrative world, he is doing so through the proleptic method. It is like a prophecy. The best example of this method is the passion prediction. This prediction is made three times (8:31; 9:31; 10:33) and points proleptically to what will occur later. Thanks to this method Mark’s

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27 A. George and P. Grelot, Introduction à la Bible, 44-45.
28 Malbon, In the Company of Jesus, 16.
29 Ibid., 16.
author/narrator earns the trust of his readers and from that moment he is able to go further and predict events which won’t occur in the narrated story but will hopefully occur later. For example, when the young man at the empty tomb (16:7) predicts that Jesus will go before his disciples to Galilee, echoing Jesus’ word in the Hill of Olives (14:28), “he points proleptically to an event that is not narrated within the story-as-discoursed.”

Once we have described Mark’s methodology in the plot, we can detect the key of the Markan plot. The plot “moves by conflicts.” Those conflicts are between Jesus and the other characters, such as his disciples (conflict over the meaning of the Messiah and discipleship), the Jewish authorities (conflict over authority to interpret the Law), and his family (conflict over genealogy). We can conclude that ‘conflict’ is the key to the Markan plot and those conflicts “have to do with power and authority.”

Some authors have proposed a particular doctrinal index. Augustin George and Pierre Grelot suggest that Mark’s Gospel “exposes two periods which characterise the object and economy of the revelation.” The key point of these two periods is Peter’s confession (8:29-30). Before Peter’s confession, Jesus unveils himself as “Messiah” but demands the Messianic secret (1:34-44; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26). After Peter’s confession, Mark’s author unveils the mystery of “Son of man”, which deepens the first revelation, Jesus as Messiah. Jesus does not demand the

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30 Ibid., 16.
31 Ibid., 17.
32 Ibid., 17.
Messianic secret at this point (10:46-52); perhaps because the blind man of Jericho presents positive aspects of discipleship: he has faith, he sees again and more importantly, once he is cured, instead of going his way, he follows Jesus along the road. However, the disciples keep showing their weakness of faith (9:18s), and they misunderstood the destiny of Jesus, and not just his Mission (9:33s).

5. Style, the “footprint” of the author.

Mark’s author is interested in dialogue with the receptors of his message. He does not use a sophisticated or elegant style of writing. We now turn to explore his stylistic characteristics in order to appreciate this perspective of his text. The style of the Markan narrator is “simple and direct because he uses ordinary language to tell this extraordinary story.” The originality of his style is “the contrast between the living features and the very simple patterns.” For example, the entry into Jerusalem (11:1-6) and the preparation of the Lord’s Supper (14:13.14.16) are two prophetic style events written with the same ‘simple pattern’, as is shown in the following box. Both events have followed the same dynamic, but the vibrancy of the description gives each scene a unique quality. Mark is able to show something colourful in a very simple way.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark 11:1-6</th>
<th>Mark 14:13-15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 And as they approached Jerusalem, at Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, <strong>He sent two of His disciples.</strong></td>
<td>13 And <strong>He sent two of His disciples, and said to them,</strong> &quot;Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him;&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 and <strong>said to them,</strong> &quot;Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it here.&quot;</td>
<td>14 and wherever he enters, <strong>say to the owner of the house,</strong> 'The Teacher says, 'Where is My guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?'&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


36 Rhoads *et al.*, *Mark as Story*, 46.

3 "And if anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' you say, 'The Lord has need of it'; and immediately he will send it back here."

4 And they went away and found a colt tied at the door outside in the street; and they untied it.

5 And some of the bystanders were saying to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?"

6 And they spoke to them just as Jesus had told them, and they gave them permission

15 "And he himself will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; and prepare for us there."

16 And the disciples went out, and came to the city, and found it just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover.

Mark’s style is also “terse because he uses few words to suggest images and evoke pictures.” The poverty of Mark’s vocabulary is astounding. The vocabulary is monotone. Verbs are repetitive, “such as ‘to do’, ‘to have’, and ‘to want’ which are used without fear of fatiguing the reader.” Words are “concrete and literal rather than abstract and symbolic.” Connections between events are usually not spelled out, “almost any episode will reveal how few words are employed to depict so much.” Descriptions can be pictorial and suggestive such as ‘like a dove’ or ‘among the wild animals’; or other times they can be detailed and exact such as ‘asleep on the cushion’ (4:38). Places are simple; Jesus is “either in the house (7:17; 9:28-33; 10:10) or on the way (8:27; 10:32)” Diminutives are frequent. Mark’s author remembers that “Jesus used the word ‘little girl’ to resuscitate the child of Jairus (5:41); he remembers the ‘small boat’ (3:9), little sandals (6:9), and the ‘tip of the ear’ of the high priest’s servant (14:47).”

Mark’s author has also some Aramaic words in his poor vocabulary, in case of confusion or misunderstanding, he explained and clarified Aramaic words such as Βοανηργες (3:17), ταληθα κουμ (5:41), κορβαν (7:11), ἐφφαθα (7:34), Βαρτιμαιος (10:46),

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38 Rhoads et al., Mark as Story, 46.
39 Ibid., 35.
40 Ibid., 46.
41 Ibid., 46
42 A. George and P. Grelot, Introduction à la Bible, 35.
43 Ibid., 36.
Mark’s author is guided “not by the rules of style, but by the testimony of memory to be transmitted.”

Although Mark has a limited vocabulary in Greek and Aramaic, some writers admire the variety of the words describing the realities. For example they have counted “eleven different words for ‘home’ and ‘its parts’, ten different words for ‘clothes’, nine others for ‘food’.” That is the case for numbers in Mark’s gospel as well. He limits his choice of numbers to a small selection among which he prefers the numbers twelve (12), nine times, and three (3), two times. Some of these may have symbolic values at different points or may be characteristic of his style.

As a good narrator, Mark uses verbs in particular tenses to give a lively pace to the stories. Mark does not use all the Greek past tenses. He uses the imperfect, a past perfect tense to refer to a repeated or continuous action in the past.

He also uses the perfect, past tense referring to an action which happened and has an enduring effect.

The pace of Mark’s Gospel is marked by the brevity of style and rapidity of motion. Brevity and rapidity give a tone of urgency to the narrative. Rhoads suggests that the rapid movement of action and dialogue is broken only twice, with two monologues of Jesus: First when he tells a series of riddles from a boat and later when he prophesies to four disciples on the Mountain of the Olives. The pace of urgency in

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44 Ibid., 36
Mark’s narrative reinforces the urgency of Jesus’ central message: ‘The time is fulfilled, and the rule of God has arrived’ (1:15). πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς is a unique statement in Mark, no other Gospel has this expression. It is important because with ὁ καιρὸς Mark’s author is talking about the moment of God’s coming into the world, and that ὁ καιρὸς is fulfilled, completed, finished or πεπλήρωται.

The reader is drawn into the story by these stylistic features, which “along with the vivid use of the present tense for past action, keep the narrative flowing at a fast pace.” The reader’s attention is maintained by the “gaps in description and meaning,” which the author invites us to fill through imagination. The plain Markan style “keeps the focus on the story itself without drawing attention to the storytelling.”

5.1 Mark as an accomplished storyteller.

Mark’s Greek is in a Semitic style parataxis. We find parallelisms in his Gospel. Mark’s narrator proceeds by approximation, step by step, bringing the listener to slowly realize the scene he describes. “Jesus is not content to say that Satan is coming to an end, he prepares this by saying that he cannot stand (3:26).”

Even more, Mark’s author “knows perfectly the common ancestor of popular style and Semitic style, the oral style”. We, the readers, must read his Gospel as auditors who are listening to a story recounted by a witness. The art of the storyteller is felt especially when we realize that there are various oral features in the way the narrator is telling the story, that he ‘shows’, instead of ‘telling’, the events “by a

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46 Ibid., 39.
47 Ibid., 39.
48 Rhoads et al., Mark as Story, 46.
49 A. George and P. Grelot, Introduction à la Bible, 36.
50 Ibid., 36.
51 Ibid., 36.
straightforward recounting of actions and dialogue. For example, some episodes are usually brief, scenes change often, and minor characters appear and quickly disappear. This art of the storyteller is felt as well when we see that Mark leaves the listener time to remember what was said in the same story by different characters. As in these Markan scenes: 12:41-44 the widow, 15:44-45 Pilate, 16:3-4 rolling back the stone.

A good storyteller uses double negatives, historic present, also called dramatic present or narrative present, referring to the use of the present tense when narrating past events. He also uses the impersonal plural and multiples the participles. Mark’s author applies all these literary techniques (1:44; 2:2; 3:20-27; 5: 37; 6:5; 7:12; 8:11; 14:12.14.34; 14:25.60.61; 15:4.5; 16:8).

Mark is indeed a storyteller. Mark’s author transmits the message to his audience through imagination and faith. Dewey’s hypothesis shows us that Mark's Gospel works well as oral literature, making use of oral composition techniques, such as short episodes connected paratactically; the story is composed of happenings that can be easily visualized and thus readily remembered; the narrative is additive and aggregative; teaching is not gathered into discourses according to topic but rather embedded in short narratives.

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52 Rhoads et al., *Mark as Story*, 46.
6. Rhetoric, the narrative as “persuasion.”

The art of persuasion, rhetoric, refers to “how the story is told to create certain effects on the reader,”\(^57\) through it we can go further and figure out how the implied reader is persuaded by the implied author. The writer does it step by step, “he first persuades the reader to understand, and then to share and extend the story’s levels of meaning.”\(^58\) Mark’s narrative rhetoric is persuasive. If you look at Mark’s Gospel with “historical-literal glasses”, you might have problems trying to locate some places or even characters which are shown in the Gospel. But if you look at Mark’s Gospel with “narrative-rhetorical glasses”, you will not have any problem locating meanings for those places or characters shown in it.

Unlike the other Gospels, Mark’s rhetoric is one of juxtaposition. According to some literary analysts, Mark’s author juxtaposes his sources, while the other Gospels compose them.\(^59\) But why does Mark’s author use juxtaposition? As far as we can see, there are two reasons. Firstly, Mark’s author wants to encourage the implied reader to be attentive and make connections since “neither the characters nor the narrator make the items explicit: Sea, boat, bread, twelve, seven. ‘Do you not yet understand?’ (8:17)”\(^60\) For instance: The “sea”, in the minds of those who have read the Old Testament, is the place where God manifests divine power, as it happened with Moses: “Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided.” (Exodus 14:21). And it is on the “sea” that Jesus has manifested his divine power: “He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the

\(^{57}\) Rhoads et al., Mark as Story, 46.
\(^{58}\) Cf. Malbon, In the Company of Jesus, 18.
\(^{59}\) A. George and P. Grelot, Introduction à la Bible, 47.
\(^{60}\) Malbon, In the Company of Jesus, 38.
sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm” (Mark 4:39). Doing so, the implied reader is attentive to the important matter, since everything is not explicit; “what is made explicit becomes all the more important.”

Secondly, Mark’s author wants to push the implied reader to judge the contrasting characters, different attitudes, diverse dialogues, peculiar scenes, and above all to judge himself or herself. Once the implied reader is in front of the text, he asks “What does the text mean?”, but then he goes further asking “What does the text mean to me?” “What does the text mean to us?” Once we understand clearly the reasons for the use of juxtaposition by Mark’s author, we attempt to clarify the methodology. How does Mark’s author use juxtaposition? He juxtaposes Items by “placing scene over against scene in order to elicit comparison, contrast, and insight.” As we have said above, Mark’s Gospel is a literature to be heard, and such a literature is “typically episodic and makes connections not so much by linear progression as by various forms of repetition.” Mark’s episodes are intertwined with each other by patterns of repetition not only of scenes but also of words and phrases, occurrence of foreshadowing and retrospections, intercalation, framing, similarities of scenes and situations, echoing, symbolism, irony, and the clustering of episodes in series of three. The rich variety in repetition serves not only to connect episodes but also to “develop character, advance the plot, and amplify themes in Mark’s narrative design.” We will consider each of the favourite Markan rhetorical devices:

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61 Ibid., 33.
62 Cf. Ibid., 18-19.
63 Ibid., 18.
64 Rhoads et al., Mark as Story, 47.
65 Ibid., 47.
6.1 Verbal threads.

Repetition of key words and phrases in an episode or a series of interwoven episodes is one of the most common threads in Mark’s Gospel. This literary feature has many functions: It alerts readers to key themes within an episode, it provides emphasis for themes, it connects adjacent episodes, it gives continuity to the story, it enhances the story and persuades readers to make connections.

Verbal threads occur when “words in a question are repeated in the answer, words in commands and requests are repeated in their fulfilment,” 66 as the incident of eating with tax collectors and sinners (2:15).

Verbal threads also appear in different episodes. For example, the “ripping” of the temple veil just before the centurion confesses Jesus as “son of God” recalls by ‘verbal association’ 67 the “ripping” of the heavens just before God pronounces Jesus to be “My beloved Son”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark 15</th>
<th>Mark 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38 And the veil of the temple <strong>was ripped</strong> in two from top to bottom.</td>
<td>10 And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens <strong>torn apart</strong> and the spirit descending like a dove on him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39 And when the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, “Truly this man was the <strong>Son of God</strong>!”</td>
<td>11 and a voice came out of the heavens: “You are <strong>My beloved Son</strong>, in you I am well-pleased.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.2 Foreshadowing

Mark’s author has other forms of repetition, one is foreshadowing. It occurs when the narrator or some of the characters ‘anticipate’ later events. It is widespread in Mark’s Gospel. One of the most used techniques of foreshadowing is prophecy. A prophecy

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66 Ibid., 48.
67 Ibid., 48.
will predict certain events creating suspense by “leading the reader to experience, in a partial and enigmatic way, what will be fully understood only when what was foreshadowed happens.”68 Some prophecies are quotations from the writings, while others “originate from characters in the story, first John and then Jesus.”69 The difference between these two kinds of prophecies is in their fulfilment. Prophecy as quotation from the writings is fulfilled within Mark’s story: “As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight'” (Is 1:2-4). That prophecy is fulfilled in the same chapter: “John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Mk 1:4). But some prophecies as originated by Jesus will be fulfilled in a near future after Mark’s story ends: “But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee” (14:28). Mark’s narrator ends the Gospel in an enigmatic way. Because the reader has seen the fulfilment of some of Jesus’ prophecies within the Markan story, he believes that other prophecies will be fulfilled beyond the Markan story. Jesus did not and will not disappoint them. Peter’s denial foretold (14:26-31) is a perfect example of anticipation of an event that is coming. By predicting his betrayal, Jesus anticipates for Peter that Peter will deny him. Although some of the prophecies are fulfilled in Mark’s story, some others are held in abeyance, “But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you” (16:7).

68 Rhoads et al., Mark as Story, 48.
69 Ibid., 59.
6.3 Retrospection.

Another major form of repetition in Mark is retrospection. It occurs when the narrator or some of the characters ‘recall’ earlier events. Unlike the foreshadowing, retrospection works in reverse. One of the most used techniques of retrospection is the ‘flashback’ which “often resolves suspense by showing the outcome of what was previously foreshadowed”\(^7^0\) Mark’s narrator leads his readers to “clarify and amplify their understanding of earlier events.”\(^7^1\) Peter’s denial (14:72) is also an accurate example of retrospection of an event that has been foretold. As soon as Peter subsequently renounces Jesus, Peter himself recalls in retrospect the earlier prophecy of his denial. “At that moment the cock crowed for the second time. Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him, ‘Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.’ And he broke down and wept” (14:72). Peter remembrance of Jesus’ prophecy is “an ominous echo of the earlier foreshadowing.”\(^7^2\) For the reader, “the eventual narrating of events that have been anticipated resolves the suspense created by the earlier foreshadowing.”\(^7^3\) The reader ‘remembers’ the prophecy foreshadowed earlier by the way Mark’s narrator describes the events. Once the reader realizes the similarity in the narration, between what was said and what is happening, he confirms the prophecy’s fulfilment through retrospection.

6.4 Two-step progressions

Mark’s author uses an omnipresent pattern of repetition, the two-step progression. He applies this literary feature in three diverse levels: Intra-textual, inter-textual and hyper-textual.

\(^{70}\) Ibid.
\(^{71}\) Ibid., 49.
\(^{72}\) Malbon, *In the Company of Jesus*, 18-19.
\(^{73}\) Rhoads et al., *Mark as Story*, 49.
Two-step progressions occur at an intra-textual level (progression within the text), where words, phrases, and whole events in the same episode are moving from one point to another. It occurs in phrases, such as, “that evening, at sundown” (1:32) where Mark’s author adds a second part to the time reference. The progression of the same idea gives emphasis, precision and clarification to the first part. It also occurs in sentences, such as, “Keep watch, and pray that you don’t come to a testing” (14:38). The same idea is reinforced by the progressive pairs of imperatives. And it appears in parallel statements, such as, “the right time is fulfilled, and the rule of God has arrived,” as well as in contrasting clauses.74

Two-step progressions occur at an inter-textual level (progression between texts), where words, phrases, and whole events in the same book but from different episodes are moving from one point to another. It occurs between episodes and “it structures some of them, moving from a general to a specific setting.”75 “They came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple” (11:15). Mark’s Gospel depicts Jesus going into Jerusalem, general setting, then into the temple, specific setting. Two-step progressions also structure some of the episodes moving from a public to a private spatial setting. “When he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about the parable.” (7:17). There is a progression from Jesus’ public teaching and action to a private explanation to his disciples who were as confused as the crowd. Jesus has in fact been working in two stages all through Mark’s Gospel. As soon as he preaches parables, he gives explanations of them. Just as he healed Jewish people (10:46), he does the same for Gentiles (7:24). Just as he fed Jewish people (6:35-44), he does the same for Gentiles (8:1-10). The duality of the Markan Jesus’ technique “reflects the twofoldness of the Markan implied author’s

74 Cf. Ibid., 50.
75 Ibid., 50.
conviction: Jesus is Messiah for both Jews and Gentiles. Jesus is Messiah of power and suffering service.”

Finally, two-step progressions occur at a hyper-textual level (progression over all the text), where sections of the whole book are moving from one point to another. These occur over the whole Gospel, and provide a progression from the beginning, through the midpoint, to the end of the Gospel. In the beginning of the story, God proclaims Jesus as “the anointed one, the son of God” (1:11). At the midpoint of the story, Peter acknowledges Jesus as “the anointed one” (8:29). These progressions emphasize “the coming of God’s rule in acts of power and mercy.” At the end of the story, the centurion identifies Jesus as “son of God” (15:39). They emphasize “the persecution that results from living out God’s rule in this age.”

There appears a progressive unveiling in the portrayal of Jesus from one half of the Gospel to the next.

The two-step progressions applied at these three levels “create suspense by maintaining the reader’s desire to see what is yet to come.” But there is more, they guide readers to take a serious second look at the story, as a quick look is not enough, thus a second look will clarify the sense of what is being revealed.

6.5 Type-scenes

Mark’s Gospel has a lot of patterns throughout his story. Patterns are clear in the way the Markan narrator recounts the story. They are similar episodes repeated with variation. Some of the episodes which repeat with variation the same complex dynamic are “exorcisms, nature miracles, conflicts with the authorities, healing and

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76 Malbon, In the Company of Jesus, 40.
77 Rhoads et al., Mark as Story, 50.
78 Ibid., 50.
79 Ibid., 50.
misunderstandings by the disciples."\textsuperscript{80} Scholars call them “type-scenes.” They are important in our study of Markan literary features because they contribute to “characterization, plot development, and thematic amplification”\textsuperscript{81} and they reinforce the basic pattern with each additional repetition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type-scene</th>
<th>Mk 6:14</th>
<th>Mk 15:1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A person of authority has a choice to make</td>
<td>King Herod</td>
<td>Pilate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About someone’s fate</td>
<td>John</td>
<td>Jesus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At a public event</td>
<td>Herod’s birthday</td>
<td>Passover festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathetic toward the person.</td>
<td>He knew John to be an upright and holy man and kept him safe.</td>
<td>He realized that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him out of envy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone manipulates another to request the death</td>
<td>Herodias’ daughter asked her mother who demands his death</td>
<td>Chief priests stirred up the crowd to ask his death.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority figure executes the person</td>
<td>King was very displeased but...</td>
<td>As Pilate wanted to please the people...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.6 Sandwiched episodes

Mark’s author uses sandwiched episodes. This occurs when one episode is included or “‘sandwiched’ between the beginning and ending of another episode.”\textsuperscript{82} It could be also seen as an interruption of the first episode by a second episode and then the story continues with the conclusion of the first episode. It occurs to illuminate a common theme. The manner to illuminate the theme is by comparison, for example, “Jesus’ cursing of the fruitless fig tree (11:12-14) parallels his attack on the temple authorities for failing to bear fruit for Israel (11:15-19).”\textsuperscript{83} Nevertheless, comparison is not the only way. Sandwiched episodes are illuminated by contrast as well, for example, a named men, Judas, giving up Jesus for money (14:10-11) contrasts with an unnamed woman giving up money, expensive ointment, for Jesus (14:3).

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 51.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 51.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 51.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 52.
6.7 Intercalation

Mark’s rhetoric of juxtaposition includes intercalation. It occurs when Mark’s author splices one story into another as entwined serpents. The interwoven scenes of Jesus’ trial before the high priest and Peter’s denial (14:53-72) illustrate it. They are intercalated. Mark’s narrator first tells the introduction of Jesus situation and then the Peter one. Thereupon, Mark’s narrator explains the meeting between Jesus and the high priest and other chief priests and then the dialogue between Peter and the high priest’s servant girl and other bystanders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jesus</th>
<th>Mark’s story</th>
<th>Peter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mark 14:53 They took Jesus to the high priest; and all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes were assembled.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mark 14:54 Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the guards, warming himself at the fire.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark 14:55.65 Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for testimony against Jesus to put him to death; but they found none. Some began to spit on him, to blindfold him, and to strike him, saying to him, “Prophesy!” The guards also took him over and beat him.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark 14:66.72 While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came by. At that moment the cock crowed for the second time. Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him, “Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.” And he broke down and wept.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The readers cannot forget “the presence of Peter ‘warming himself at the fire’ while Jesus endures the fiery rage of the high priest,“\textsuperscript{84} and the sharp contrast between Jesus’ courageous confession and Peter’s cowardly denial. At the end of these two ‘micro-story’ or intercalated episodes, the readers realize that Jesus’ scene concludes with the guards taunting him to “Prophesy!” and Peter’s scene concludes with Peter’s recognition of Jesus’ prophecy fulfilled.

\textsuperscript{84} Malbon, \textit{In the Company of Jesus}, 18-19.
6.8 Framing episodes

Mark’s author frames episodes by placing similar stories “as beginning and end of a series.” It occurs to delimit large sections of the Gospel as well as to relate paired episodes to each other and “in comparison or contrast with the material they frame.” For example, Jesus’ prophecies about the end of the world, the last days of Jerusalem and the coming of the Son of Man, are framed. On one side is the episode of the “poor widow” who puts into the temple treasury out of her need and on the other side is the episode of the “unknown woman” who anoints Jesus with costly ointment.

The framing episodes, connected by several verbal threads, “depict acts of self-giving and parallel the commitments that all the followers of Jesus will have to make if they are to remain faithful in the future.”

6.9 Episodes in a concentric pattern

Mark’s author organizes episodes in the form of rings around a central episode. This relation of episodes in a concentric pattern is a common technique of ancient narration known as “chiastic structure.” As an oral literary device, it occurs to help “the performer, the audience, and new performers and audiences remember and

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85 Ibid., 18.
86 Rhoads et al., Mark as Story, 52.
87 Ibid., 52.
transmit the material.”\textsuperscript{88} It is a storytelling strategy to get the picture. For example, in Mark’s passion narrative there is a clear concentric relationship between Jesus and the authorities.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
  \node[rectangle, draw] (A) at (0,0) {A. Arrest by Jewish crowd armed};
  \node[rectangle, draw] (B) at (2,2) {B. Jesus before Jews authority};
  \node[rectangle, draw] (C) at (0,4) {C. Peter disowns Jesus};
  \node[rectangle, draw] (B') at (2,6) {B' Jesus before Roman authority};
  \node[rectangle, draw] (A') at (0,8) {A' Mockery by Roman soldiers};

  \path[->] (A) edge (B)
  (B) edge (C)
  (C) edge (B')
  (B') edge (A')
  (A') edge (A);
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

It is composed by five conflict episodes which create a circular and linear progression. One episode (A) is followed by a similar second (B), then a third (C) that clarifies the first two (A-B). With this clarification in mind, readers experience another fourth episode (B’) that recalls the second episode (B) and then a final one (A’) that comes back around to recall the first episode (A).\textsuperscript{89}

6.10 Progressive episodes in series of three.

Some episodes exhibit a pattern of repetition in direct sequence and in series of three. They are identified by “the similarity in narrative structure, the presence of

\textsuperscript{89} Cf. Rhoads \textit{et al.}, \textit{Mark as Story}, 52.
verbal threads, common themes, the continuation of a conflict, the involvement of the same characters, and the repetition of a similar setting. They highlight for readers the importance of the situation taking place and also suggest that the issues involved in the first and second scenes would be more clearly understood if they look back from the perspective of the third scene.

Some examples are noticeably found in Mark’s passion narrative, namely, Jesus prays three times in Gethsemane and three times returns to find the disciples sleeping; Peter disowns Jesus three times; Pilate asks the crowd three leading questions about releasing Jesus, each of which is responded to negatively; the narrator recounts events of the crucifixion in three-hour intervals (nine o’clock, noon, and three o’clock).  

6.11 Questions

Mark’s narrator puts many questions in the mouths of characters. Mark’s questions appear in patterns and multiples. They occur to “heighten the drama by creating suspense and tension, intensify the conflicts, and reveal character.” Jesus disciples are distinguished from his opponents not by possessing the right answers but “by being possessed by the right question: Not “Why does he not perform a sign from heaven?” (8:11), but “Who then is this?” (4:41).” Mark’s narrator is not interested in getting information from the characters but in showing their actions and reactions. That is why he prefers ‘rhetorical’ questions rather than ‘yes/no’ questions. Many of the questions are rhetorical, where the characters are not looking for an answer but are making some kind of a point inasmuch as only one answer is really possible.

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90 Ibid., 54.
91 Ibid., 54.
92 Ibid., 55.
93 Malbon, In the Company of Jesus, 38.
This particular kind of question occurs to engage readers by “leading them to answer the questions for themselves or to want to know how they will be answered by the story.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>To Disciples</th>
<th>To Opponents</th>
<th>To Jesus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From Jesus</td>
<td>Double rhetorical question. “Don’t you understand this parable? How then will you understand any of the parables?”</td>
<td>Single rhetorical question followed by an assertion. “Why does this generation seek a sign? Amen I tell you...”</td>
<td>Double rhetorical question. What is the kingdom of God like? To what shall we compare it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Disciples</td>
<td>Rhetorical question. “So who is this that even the wind and the sea obey him?”</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>Single question. “Where in a deserted place like this could we get enough bread to feed these people?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Opponents</td>
<td>Accusing question. “Why is he eating with the tax collectors and sinners?”</td>
<td>Ironic question. “Do you want me to set free the King of the Jews?”</td>
<td>Trick question. “Is it against the Law to pay taxes to Caesar? Should we pay them or not?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.12 Quotations from the writings

Mark’s author weaves his narrative with the support of divine scripture. In the whole Gospel, we can find almost “twenty-two explicit quotations from ‘the writings,’” or divine scriptures. Mark’s author quotes from the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets overall. However, Mark’s narrator cites the writing ‘explicitly’ only once (1:2-3), in a half prophecy from Isaiah (40:3) and the other half from Malachias (3:1). The rest of the quotations are on the lips of characters in the story, particularly on Jesus’ mouth.

They occur to reveal the traits of characters who quote them, as well as Jesus’ superior authority to interpret divine scriptures. They also occur to explain some events, not only to the characters within the story but to the readers as well. They occur to interpret the significance of characters’ traits revealed (the stumbling of the disciples) and the situations explained (the purpose of the riddles) which are often

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94 Ibid., 56.
95 Rhoads et al., Mark as Story, 58.
allegoric. As a case in point, Jesus, in Mark’s gospel, said: "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables; in order that 'they may indeed look, but not perceive, and may indeed listen, but not understand; so that they may not turn again and be forgiven'" (4:11-12); Mark’s Jesus quotes from Isaiah his justification for the use of riddles: “And he said, "Go and say to this people: 'Keep listening, but do not comprehend; keep looking, but do not understand' (Isaiah 6:9). In our specific area of Mark’s passion narrative, interesting quotations from Zechariah (13:7), Psalms (42:6; 22:19; 22:2) and Daniel (7:13) appear which occur to “open the story to numerous associations for the reader and show how Jesus’ death was part of a larger cosmic design and purpose.”96

6.13 Riddles

Mark’s Jesus tells stories that illuminate or obscure his own story, his words and deeds. The Markan “stories within the story”97 are symbolic; they involve the juxtaposition of “a literal meaning and a metaphorical one.”98 They are cryptic stories about a hidden reality. Markan Jesus’ parables are cryptic and obscure, they are riddles. When Jesus tells a riddle, the characters in the story must decipher them in order for their meaning to be disclosed. Some of the Markan riddles are allegories - analogies with several points of correlation- about “the hidden presence of the rule of God in the story world.”99 These enigmatic and cryptic riddles lead the readers to be further involved in figuring out the story, and to be more motivated in resolving the

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96 Ibid., 58-59.
97 Ibid., 56.
98 Malbon, *In the Company of Jesus*, 18.
99 Rhoads *et al.*, *Mark as Story*, 56-57.
riddles that Jesus did not explain on the basis of interpretation which Jesus has used to interpret the others.

In Mark’s Gospel, Jesus himself gives to his riddles three different purposes. He tells riddles as a “call to understanding,” as a “barrier to understanding,” and as a “shield protector.” Firstly, Jesus’ riddles are a “call to understanding” when they are introduced with this kind of sentence: "Listen!" (4:3). They are addressed to those who accept God’s rule. Secondly, Jesus’ riddles are a “barrier to understanding” when they are concluded with this kind of sentence: “so that looking they look and don’t see, and hearing they hear and don’t understand" (4:12). They are addressed to those who reject God’s rule. Finally, Jesus’ riddles are a “shield protector” when they do not make a direct statement. Jesus avoids a charge of blasphemy or an accusation to be arrested by speaking in riddles. For example, with the riddle about the vineyard (12:1-11), “Jesus explains his authority as God’s Son in an indirect way that does not expose him to indictment.” The purpose of these riddles is to show Jesus as a wise teacher, zealous protector and a cautious prophet of God’s message.

6.14 Irony

Mark’s narrator juxtaposes “an apparent or expected meaning with a deeper or surprising one.” Markan irony is verbal and dramatic. Verbal irony occurs when “a speaker intentionally says one thing but means the opposite.” Let’s say it occurs when somebody speaks sarcastically. Verbal irony is the action of the roman soldiers who mock Jesus by hailing him as king (15:17-18). Dramatic irony occurs when

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100 Ibid., 57.
101 Malbon, In the Company of Jesus, 18.
102 Rhoads et al., Mark as Story, 60.
“there is a discrepancy between what a character blindly thinks to be the case and the real situation is, or between what a character expects to happen and what actually happens.”

Let’s say it occurs when something appears in contrast with the reality; what the speaker says is in contrast with the way things really are. Dramatic irony is the double sense of the action of Jesus’ opponents at the trial who thinking they have rightly condemned this blasphemer to death, are, in fact, under condemnation for rejecting God’s agent. This dramatic irony is also integral to the overall design of the Gospel, “for the rule of God turns out to be different from what most characters in the story expect.”

Mark’s narrator uses irony as a rhetorical device which pervades the narrative, “perhaps because of the irony that lies at the heart of the story Mark tells, the Son of God who is rejected and killed by the very human race he had come to save.”

Markan irony has been used to gain readers’ confidence. Markan irony creates a “community between the reader and the narrator,” as they share something that puts them on the inside of the story; they know the reality behind appearances. By doing so, Mark’s narrator has persuaded the readers into accepting his own point of view. But once the reader thinks he knows perfectly Jesus’ story, Mark’s narrator turns irony back upon the reader with an ironic ending of the story he was telling. Now it is “the reader who expects one thing but gets another.”

When the reader was expecting the proclamation of Jesus resurrection by the women, they got the fact that the women “went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them” (16:8). This ironic ending becomes an invitation and command to

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103 Ibid.
104 Rhoads et al., Mark as Story, 60.
106 Ibid., Mark as Story, 61.
107 Ibid., 62.
proclaim that Jesus is risen instead of being silent, seized by terror and amazement. It shows us one of Mark’s theological goals with his gospel was “to move his readers from observers to participants, and thus to move them to share in the gospel whose beginnings he had narrated in his account of Jesus of Nazareth.”

Besides the central core of Markan irony, there are other secondary ironies that abound in the narrative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ironic scene</th>
<th>Apparent situation.</th>
<th>Real situation.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healing on the Sabbath</td>
<td>Pharisees by their plotting demonstrate that they thought Jesus’ good deed to the cripple was illegal.</td>
<td>Pharisees, careful observers of God’s law, on that same Sabbath tacitly affirmed the legality of doing harm by plotting to kill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parable of the Vineyard.</td>
<td>Religious officials in the temple court reject the content of the parable.</td>
<td>By doing so, they brought it to reality when they, too, rejected the owner of the vineyard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scribes.</td>
<td>They studied God’s Torah and learn his will.</td>
<td>They were unable to recognize that the power by which Jesus worked was from that same God whose law they studied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciples.</td>
<td>They hope to gain honour, wealth, and power from their association with this anointed agent of God’s rule.</td>
<td>What they get is an invitation to serve everyone and the likelihood of persecution for following Jesus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apostles.</td>
<td>Those closest to Jesus.</td>
<td>They don’t understand him, one deserts him and another betrays him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon, the rock.</td>
<td>He tries to behave like a strong person, vehemently insisting that he will die with Jesus rather than deny him.</td>
<td>He is really the opposite of the nickname Jesus gave him, for he falls asleep and later flees at the incriminating remarks of a servant-girl of the high priest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter’s denial (Sadly ironic).</td>
<td>Peter’s noisy denial of his discipleship in order to save his life.</td>
<td>It is narrated almost simultaneously with Jesus’ quiet affirmation of his Messiahship, although it will lead to his death.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus’ religious opponents</td>
<td>They accuse him of blasphemy in calling himself God’s son (14:64)</td>
<td>Something God himself had twice acknowledged (1:11; 9:7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilate</td>
<td>He, in his attempt to maintain the <em>pax romana</em>, released Barabbas and condemned Jesus.</td>
<td>Barabbas who had been imprisoned precisely for his role in an insurrection he had committed and Jesus who had been imprisoned for the crime of insurrection he had not committed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women. (More striking irony)</td>
<td>Women commissioned to tell the disciples the good news of Jesus’ resurrection</td>
<td>They failed to do so because of fear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciples fear and flight.</td>
<td>The death caused in the disciples fear and flight.</td>
<td>The resurrection caused in the women fear and flight.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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6.15 Foreknowledge.

In Mark’s Gospel Jesus knows what people were thinking (2:8), who touched him (5:30), the thoughts of others and even the events yet to occur such as his passion (10:33-34; 14:63; 15:1; 15:19). This literary feature is used by Mark’s author as a way to “heighten the reader’s confidence that whatever Jesus predicts will happen, will in fact occur.”109 Because Jesus’ predictions are proved true, the reader has gained so much confidence in Jesus’ ability to foreknow the future that he believes in Jesus’ predictions which have yet to occur such as the question of Jesus’ identity: sitting at heaven (14:62), the promise of drinking wine in God’s kingdom and that he would go ahead of them to Galilee, after he was raised from the dead. Foreknowledge is also used to “emphasize that although Mark’s narrative is finished, the story of Jesus has yet to be completed.”110 Readers who trust in Mark’s Jesus have to complete “what remains of the story in their own lives.”111

As we have seen above, Mark’s gospel has its own literary characteristics. A narrative critical analysis of Mark’s gospel has led us to the essential theological issues, and the Markan Passion narrative won’t be the exception. Mark’s Christology in its final chapters will be more easily recognizable through its literary characteristics. The application of all these narrative elements to the Markan gospel and the identification of its rhetorical devices will provide us with a profound answer to the question which has moved us to explore the text: What is the portrait of Jesus in Mark’s passion narrative? There follows a narrative critical analysis of two scenes of Mark’s Passion Narrative: Gethsemane and Golgotha.

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109 Ibid., 554.
110 Ibid., 554.
111 Ibid., 554.
CHAPTER 2

GETHSEMANE

In Mark’s passion narrative everything becomes more specific. Spatial and temporal settings play an important role in this story. When Mark’s author tells us that Jesus with all his disciples went to a place called “Gethsemane” (14:32) and that they did so after singing psalms of praise (14:26), he is slowing the process to appreciate better the dramatic situation.

On the Mount of Olives, the particular place called Gethsemane, “oil press”, is a “secluded grove of olive trees on the slope of the mountain.”¹ The important-element in Mark’s description of this particular spatial setting is not the historical information² since an olive grove “is not the kind of place that would leave identifiable archaeological remains,”³ but the associative value which contributes to the meaning of the narrative for us. In this case, going to Gethsemane could mean to go to the interior, the private place, which is often in Mark “the locus for divine revelation or other manifestations of miraculous power (4:10, 34; 7:33; 9:2, 28; 13:3).”⁴ An Old Testament quotation from Zechariah (14:4-7) where the process of the eschatological battle occurs when the Lord stands in the Mount of Olives, may resonate in Mark’s author mind, because that is happening here in Gethsemane, Jesus is struggling with his Father and has taken his disciples along with him to

reveal to them the most important manifestation he has to show them, the unveiled secret of his real identity.

As with the spatial setting, the temporal setting slows everything down. If we imagine the Last Supper taking place at 6 p.m. “when it was evening” (14:17), Jesus and the disciples would then go to Gethsemane at 9 p.m. “after singing psalms of praise” (12:26). Mark’s author starts to change the pace of narration in the passion narrative. It took 13 chapters to recount 3 years of Jesus’ public life, but 3 chapters to narrate his final last week. He is slowing down his story about Jesus to get the attention of the hearers/readers. He wants us to pay careful attention to the coming things because they are the most important of all as they will unfold his true identity.

The Gethsemane episode is carefully structured. Verbal threads such as pray (14:32,35,38,39), watch (14:34,37,38) and sleep (14:37,40,41) dominate the story. It is full of vocabulary “concerning strength, ability, and weakness.” 5 Mark’s author brings out the conflict between Jesus and the disciples based on their different perceptions of the Messiah, a conflict over the meaning of Messiahship as well as the internal conflict of Jesus’ own acceptance of his role as Messiah. Throughout his account of the ministry, Mark has demonstrated that Jesus’ deeds and words have provoked opposition and with it different perceptions of his depiction that would lead to his death.6 To discover Mark’s Christology throughout the different portraits of Jesus in Gethsemane, let us make a narrative critical analysis of the two scenes in Gethsemane: the prayer and arrest of Jesus.

5 Ibid., 982.
Scene 1: Jesus’ prayer (14:32-42)

Jesus as Messiah, Son of God.

Jesus was praying alone. Mark’s author/narrator demonstrates his omniscience by telling us the exact words of Jesus silent prayer. If we look backwards in Mark’s story, Jesus had been praying alone twice before (1:35-38; 6:45-46). In those prayers, Mark’s author/narrator does not mention the words of the prayer. Gethsemane’s prayer is so important and has such a deep meaning that Mark is not satisfied with just narrating that Jesus was praying, but he goes further and echoes Jesus words to his Abba. When the Markan Jesus addresses God with the Aramaic word Abba\(^7\) which has the more intimate sense of papa (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6), it implies “a unique sense of sonship on the part of Jesus with God.”\(^8\) Mark’s narrator exposes to us the kind of relationship Jesus has with Yahweh, the God of Israel. He is the Messiah, the Son of God.

We, as readers/hearers, must pay attention to the real identity of Jesus throughout his prayer. The prayer at Gethsemane is neither a thanksgiving prayer nor a praise one. At this moment, when he is “anguished before death, tormented by the betrayal of friends, vulnerable to enemies,”\(^9\) his prayer is a lament, as in the tradition of the “Just one of Israel” (Ps 22; 42; 43; 72). Prayer is a lament and is expressing “the tenacious dedication of Jesus to his mission of compassion and service to the point


\(^9\) Senior, The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark, 70.
of death.” Mark’s Jesus is praying and by doing so he is unveiling his perception of Messiahship, the kind of Messiah he is, the ‘suffering’ ‘Son’ of God.

The prayer of lament of Mark’s Jesus is heard but unanswered, at least by explicit voice. As we have commented before, Jesus has prayed alone twice before (1:35-38; 6:45-46), and in those prayers as well as in Gethsemane we do not hear the voice of God. It seems to be a common pattern in Mark’s story. The answer to Jesus’ prayers is silence. Actually, in Mark’s Gospel God speaks only in the major events, in the baptism (1:11) and in the transfiguration (9:7). We can conclude that Jesus is not waiting for an answer. Jesus’ threefold prayer does not aim to change God’s will, but to unburden himself to God. As Raymond Brown has said, this prayer “is not one of rebellion but of confidence in God’s love and justice. God will listen and will grant the request if it is reconcilable with overall Providence.”

Nevertheless, other scholars have said that if we compare Jesus’ request “remove this cup from me” (14:36) in his prayer of lament with the whole context of Mark’s Gospel, these words in Jesus’ mouth are shocking, because “Jesus had clearly stated that the destiny of the ‘Son of Man’ was to “drink the cup” (10:38), to lay down his live for the many.” Jesus had declared in the three passion predictions that his destiny is by divine decree. And now, when the real moment of crisis has arrived, Jesus is ‘begging’ God to take away the cup destined for the Son of Man. Some scholars have considered that Mark’s Jesus “did not fully understand God’s way, he did not want to die. He did not contemplate suffering and a horrible death with stoical calm.” Jesus knew God’s way but according to the Markan portrait of Jesus, he attempted to escape from the death. It shows us that it is one thing to accept a fate that still lies in the future; it is

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10 Ibid., 77.
12 Senior, The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark, 75-76.
13 Wilfrid Harrington, What was Mark at? (Dublin: Columba press, 2008), 139.
another to accept it readily when it faces you. Jesus is fully human, not an angel or a creature from heaven; as Son of God he is a real human being, a suffering one, a “tormented child of God in love with life and fearful of death, without support except for the bedrock of God’s fidelity.”

Looking at these two different positions towards Jesus’ prayer, either prayer of confidence or prayer of rebellion, we conclude that from our narrative critical analysis it makes more sense to see in Jesus’ prayer a prayer of confidence, because in this particular scene the communion between the ‘Abba’ and the ‘Messiah, Son of God’ is even closer. As a consequence, we can affirm that Jesus is not only the Messiah, Son of God, but the suffering Son of God, who in his affliction has approached closer to his Father. From this point of view we confirm that Jesus is far away from his disciples; his loneliness at Gethsemane and their puzzling lack of any expression of sympathy, indeed of any reactions to his commandments emphasises the separation between them. A physical distance separates him from them at Gethsemane, but a real distance is in their minds, in their appreciation of Jesus’ Messiahship in the whole story.

**Jesus as Messiah, Son of David.**

Jesus said to the disciples: “Sit here while I pray” (14:32), those disciples who remain sitting down are flat characters since they won’t appear in the passion narrative, actually Jesus’ next order to them will be when he is risen “Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation” (16:15). But there are three disciples who are round characters, Peter, James and John. They were taken

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15 In what maybe is an unauthentic addition.
by Jesus to Gethsemane. Jesus chose them because they had witnessed his glory in public and private places from the beginning of his life. They had been his first disciples (1:16-20). They had been witnesses of the healing of Simon’s mother in law (1:29-34) and the raising of Jairus’ daughter from the dead (5:37), they had heard Jesus’ predictions of suffering and death, (8:31; 9:31; 10:32-34), had heard Jesus’ final discourse on the Mount of Olives, and even the heavenly voice in the transfiguration (9:7). Besides, Jesus saw their inadequate perception of the Messiah when James and John had asked for the first place (10:37) and Peter had protested against Jesus’ teaching about the kind of Messiah he was (8:32). Jesus took them along with him to a private place, to demonstrate to them the kind of Messiah he was. The disciples “who witnessed Jesus’ glory now see him in weakness and fear.”16 The three have thus been witnesses of Jesus’ life-giving power from the beginning but fail with an inexact portrait of Jesus, a wrong idea of his Messiahship; “now they become observers of his human frailty,”17 and are learning from Jesus’ perception of his own Messiahship. Mark presents these disciples as enormously privileged both in the ‘quality’ of what they have experienced and in the ‘extent’ of what they have experienced. They are an inner circle of intimates who have experienced all Jesus’ activities and even the transfiguration but nevertheless they fail.

Although Jesus strives to show clearly to them his Messiahship, they do not understand. Messiahship misunderstanding is a recurrent issue in Mark’s story.18 Jesus corrects all erroneous misconceptions of his portrait by his disciples as soon as he can. In this scene, Mark’s author uses the figure of the disciples asleep to refer

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16 Matera, Passion Narrative and Gospel Theologies, 24.
17 Marcus, Mark 8-16, 983.
18 We will analyse some of those inadequate portraits of Jesus in scene two of Gethsemane, the arrest, 49.
to their misunderstanding and even objection to a suffering Messiah. The threefold return of Jesus to the sleeping disciples is depicted through the rhetorical device of the ‘progressive sections in series of three’\textsuperscript{19}, which is emphasised with the repetitive use of Jesus’ command to ‘watch’: “Remain here, and keep awake” (14:34) and “Keep awake and pray” (14:38). “Watch” is linked with the threefold command in the final section of Jesus’ eschatological speech: “Beware, keep alert” (13:33); “keep awake” (13:35) and “Keep awake” (13:37). In all those cases they occur to advertise the importance of the situation that is happening right now. Peter, John and James do not just have a wrong conception of the Messiah, but even worse they do not want to accept the real Messiahship of Jesus, his real identity. Each time Jesus demands that they follow him in suffering, they fall asleep and doing so they say by their actions that they do not want to understand or change their conception. The disciples’ sleep, where they confirmed their stubbornness, is in stark contrast to Jesus’ repeated prayer, where he confirmed his obedience to God’s will.

According to this research, we can conclude that the portrait of Jesus in the disciple’s minds and hearts is other than that of the “suffering Messiah”. Moreover, we dare say that their portrait of Jesus is as a “Davidic Messiah”, a Messiah associated with political elements of an ancient king’s role, including military success. They identify Jesus as the coming king from the line of David, the Messiah, who “will throw off Israel’s foreign yoke and inaugurate an era of worldwide peace, prosperity and fulfilment of God’s will.”\textsuperscript{20} Jesus is the expected eschatological king from the line of David: “When Bartimaeus heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he

began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (10:47-48). The disciples recognise Jesus as a military and political leader despite “a career that was in many ways nonmessianic.” Probably Jesus was identified as Davidic Messiah because this particular image of messiahship was the most famous at that time and when they saw Jesus’ reputation for wonder working, for charismatic teaching, for association with the poor and Jesus’ clashes with the authorities, they related him to the expected ‘Messiah, Son of David’, a military conqueror and also a righteous judge.

By using intercalation, Mark’s narrator is contrasting the disciple’s portrait of Jesus as ‘Davidic Messiah’ with Jesus’ perception of himself as ‘Suffering Messiah’. The threefold commandments “Remain here and stay awake” (34); “Keep awake and pray” (38); “Get up, let us be going” (42) are addressed to the three selected disciples with their wrong portrait of Jesus. They are called to change their perception, to realize what is happening, to understand his real messiahship and then follow him to the cross. But those commandments go beyond their literal focus; they come to us, his hearers/readers, who are called to change our perception of Jesus and to follow him. Here, Mark’s narrator, the sophisticated storyteller, has shown us a comparison by contrasting two distant christologies, two different Jesus’ pictures, two distinct portrayals of Jesus. The key question here would be: Why is there this comparison? As we know, Mark’s narrator wants to progress in his revelation of Jesus’ identity, but he has placed two different Christologies in the same ring, they have fought and one of them won though the winning one is not clear at all. So, we can assume Mark’s narrator has compared them because he wanted to demonstrate that although those christologies have been accepted for

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21 Cf. Jesus as Παύμη, Son of David, is used here in a developed way to the title Παύμη.
22 Donahue and Harrington, The Gospel of Mark, 1104.
some communities, they are not accurate to Jesus’ real identity. From the darkness of confusion, Mark’s narrator speaks up and unveils Jesus’ complete portrait.

**Jesus as Son of Man**

We could think that in this contrast of Christologies between Jesus and the disciples, the first scene of Gethsemane has contributed enough. But Mark’s Jesus does not stop here and pushes the issue a little bit harder with a third Christology, the Son of Man, a portrait of Jesus which “emphasizes his humanity and nobility.” The Christological title used by Jesus when he went back the third time towards the sleeping disciples and said: “the Son of Man is now given into the hands of sinners” (14:41). “Son of Man” is a complex Christological title which is foreshadowed in Mark’s story by three groups of occurrences.

- **Son of Man, authoritative figure.**

The first of the three groups of “Son of Man” is found clearly in two different scenes at the beginning of the Markan story. Both scenes are in contexts of controversy with Jewish authorities. In the first scene the scribes are in controversy against Jesus because he has forgiven and cured a paralytic, Jesus replied that: “You may know that the Son of Man ‘has authority’ on earth to forgive sins” (2:10). In the second scene the Pharisees are in controversy against Jesus because his disciples were plucking grain on the Sabbath. Here Jesus stated: “The Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath; so the Son of Man ‘is lord’ even of the Sabbath” (2:27-28). To “have authority” and to “be Lord” are Jesus’ strong affirmations about the authority on earth that the “Son of Man” has. It includes

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23 Ibid., 411.
“pronouncing that sins are forgiven and abrogating sacred/profane distinctions in favour of meeting human needs.”

Jesus as Son of Man, in this first group of “Son of man,” distinguished himself from the suffering and “future “Son of man” who was to come in glory (since he was then upon earth), he nevertheless regarded himself as proleptically performing the functions of the coming “Son of man”.

The use of “Son of Man” is an emphasis of the title “Son of Man” as an authoritative figure who has close relationship with the Divine.

- **Son of Man, suffering and risen figure.**

The second of the three groups of “Son of Man” is found in the arrest scene at Gethsemane, and it is the most abundant of the three senses throughout the whole Markan story. In this case, the three passion predictions are the main instance to proclaim the Christological title “Son of Man” linked to suffering and rising from the dead (8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34). The three passion predictions unfold a detailed presentation of the suffering and resurrection and are followed by the disciples’ misunderstanding and Jesus’ instruction in discipleship. And it is precisely Jesus’ final discipleship instruction which enlightens the three passion predictions: “For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” (10:45). The self-giving service of the “Son of Man” is “the capstone of the teaching of the Markan Jesus in the three passion prediction units.”

It explains the statement symbolically expressed “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Mark 8:34). The invitation to take the cross has the meaning of self-giving service. Jesus’ final instruction in

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27 Malbon, *Mark’s Jesus*, 207.
discipleship shows noticeably that the “Son of Man” is παραδοθήκεται (betrayed/handed over) or δοθήκεται (given) λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν (as ransom for many).

In the context for understanding “Son of Man” in Jesus’ passion predictions, suffering as ransom for many is just half of this second group; the other half is that the “Son of Man” is also a risen figure. In the transfiguration episode we found an interesting parallel with Jesus’ words at Gethsemane “the Son of Man is now given into the hands of sinners” (14:42), a statement which only remarks the suffering figure of “Son of Man.” According to a narrative critical analysis, the relevance at the end of the transfiguration episode is the resurrection rather than the suffering. Jesus orders Peter, James and John, the same disciples as in Gethsemane, “to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead” (9:9). If the Gethsemane episode shows forth “the human and even fragile aspects of his person;” 28 the transfiguration episode reveals the glorious and even divine aspects of Jesus, who will be raised from the death. Gethsemane and transfiguration episodes act as a counterbalance in the portrait of Jesus as “Son of Man”, suffering and risen figure. The use of “Son of Man” in those cases emphasises the title “Son of Man” as a suffering and risen figure.

- **Son of Man, apocalyptic figure.**

The third and last of the three emphases for “Son of Man” is found visibly in two different scenes (13:26; 14:62) at the end of the Markan story. Both of them reflect the “Son of Man” Old Testament and apocalyptic literature background where “the figure of Son of Man was established in pre-Christian Jewish apocalyptic as the

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eschatological agent of redemption.” The term “Son of man” occurred as an eschatological figure for the first time in Jewish literature in Daniel.

As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. To him was given dominion and glory and kingship that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed (Dan 7:13-14)

Some passages from the book of Enoch, composed at the end of the first century BC, elucidate the person and work of the “Son of man,” drawing us the most complete picture of the “Son of man” in the Jewish apocalyptic tradition: “He is a pre-existent divine being. He is hidden in the presence of God from before all creation. He is revealed at the end. He appears in order to deliver the elect from persecution. He judges the kings and rulers who have persecuted the elect. He presides as a ruler in glory over the elect as a redeemed community in eternity.” Those apocalyptic traits (pre-existent redeemer, transcendent origin, supernatural appearance, supra-historical reign) give to the title “Son of man”, in its third figure, a nuance of majesty. The last source for the apocalyptic use of the term, “Son of man”, is 4 Esdras, using a language closer to the Danielic “one like to a Son of man” (7:13).

After seven days I dreamed a dream in the night. And lo, a wind arose from the sea and stirred up all its waves. As I kept looking the wind made something like the figure of a man come up out of the heart of the sea. And I saw that this man flew with the clouds of heaven; and wherever he turned his face to look, everything under his gaze trembled, and whenever his voice issued from his mouth, all who heard his voice melted as wax melts when it feels the fire (4 Esdras 13:1-4)

This man or “something like the figure of a man” is recognized later in the 4 Esdras book as “Son”; and the combination of “Son” and “Man” in 4 Esdras remarks “the

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30 Ibid., 39.
combination of the original apocalyptic tradition of the Son of Man with other elements from the O.T.  

When these things take place and the signs occur that I showed you before, then my Son will be revealed, whom you saw as a man coming up from the sea (4 Esdras 13:32).

Other usages of the term “Son of Man” in the Old Testament appear in some Psalms such as “What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?” (Psalm 8:4-5), and “O LORD, what are human beings that you regard them, or mortals that you think of them?” (Psalm 144:3) as well as in Ezekiel “He said to me, O mortal, eat what is offered to you; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel” (Ezekiel 3:1). In these examples the term “Son of man” “occurs in synonymous parallelism with human being, mankind or humanity.” The meaning is different from that given in the other occurrences.

The Old Testament (Daniel) and apocalyptic literature (4 Esdras, Enoch) background show us that the figure of the Son of man as the pre-existent divine redeemer “was embedded in the pre-Christian Jewish apocalyptic tradition. This tradition provides the most likely source for the concept of the Son of man as used by Jesus and the early church” In Mark’s Gospel, in the third group of usages of this title, the “Son of Man” is a glorious human being who is in human form and is the agent of God’s judgement. In the first Markan scene, as part of his eschatological discourse, Jesus employs “cosmic imagery and a Danielic “Son of Man” statement”: “Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory” (13:26). The “Son of Man” has apocalyptic authority at the final judgement. In the second Markan scene, responding to the high priest’ question

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31 Ibid., 39.
32 Ibid., 39.
33 Ibid., 39.
34 Malbon, Mark’s Jesus, 207.
about his identity, Jesus states: "I am; and 'you will see the Son of Man seated at
the right hand of the Power,' and 'coming with the clouds of heaven" (14:62). It is
Jesus' final and powerful "Son of Man" statement. Jesus coming in glory is the last
image presented, not his suffering. The use of "Son of Man" in those cases
emphasises the title "Son of Man" as an apocalyptic figure.

"Son of Man" from the beginning of the Markan story to the end and throughout its
three emphases (authoritative figure; suffering and risen figure; apocalyptic figure) is
only used by Mark's Jesus; no other flat or round characters in the Markan story, not
even the narrator himself, speak of Jesus as Son of Man. When this title is in the
mouth of Jesus it is formulated in the third person, not in the first one and is never
found as a mode of address or a formula of confession. The first (2:7) and last
(14:64) "Son of Man" statement are in contexts of controversy concerning
blasphemy, and are "framing the "Son of Man" statements in Mark’s narrative."35 It
could mean that taking the threefold emphases of "Son of Man" into account, we
would reach a more confessional (not blasphemous) portrait of Jesus. Taking all
those emphases of "Son of Man" into consideration, we would get a more
comprehensive conception of this title as well as of Mark’s Jesus own perception of
himself. A "Son of Man" who is "first challenging the authorities on behalf of the
weak, then suffering and dying, then rising from the dead, then telling, then coming
with glory and power."36 Once we have experienced it fully, we grasp a solid and
deep portrait of Jesus as Son of Man.

Coming back to the prayer scene at Gethsemane, the title "Son of Man" is
proclaimed here by Jesus from his anguish. We have not seen Jesus’ suffering, fear

35 Ibid., 205.
36 Ibid., 205.
and sadness before. Jesus is going to be arrested and, on the level of Mark’s intentions, this apocalyptic “Son of Man,” who is agent of God’s power, who will come with the angels to judge the world, is handed into the hands of men. A striking Markan irony appears: On the superficial level we are going to see the arrest of a powerless person, but on the level of Mark’s text the human power is going against the agent of God’s power. This dramatic irony is related with another one in the sentence “Given into the hands of sinners” (14:41). According to the Old Testament and Qumran (see 1 En. 91:12; 95:3, 7; cf. 38:5; 98:12; 1QpHab 9:9-12; 4Q171 4:7-10), “the expectation was that God would deliver sinful nations into the hands of the Son of Man.” With Jesus the opposite is happening. The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of sinners, the situation is ironic, the expected is opposite to the real situation. Mark’s narrator wants to draw Jesus’ picture as the Son of Man who “will accomplish a different kind of salvation, taking upon himself the divine judgment,” being turned over to the authorities by one of his disciples and dying in accordance to the will of his Father. After this narrative critical analysis of “Son of Man’s” three groups, we can affirm that the title used by Jesus at Gethsemane is the “Son of Man” as a suffering figure, a part of the second group we have analysed. “Son of Man” here is not developed as a totally adequate Christology. Mark’s narrative unfolds the understanding of “Son of Man” in part; it gives not a perfect or complete image of “Son of Man”, but it is going towards that, especially in the trial before the High Priest (14:61b-62).

All of this reflects the understanding of the “suffering Just Man” in Mark’s author and make us recognize that his handing over to sinners’ hands was foreshadowed in the Scriptures. We need an “appreciation of the O.T. laments for understanding Mark’s

37 Marcus, Mark 8-16, 990.
38 Ibid., 990.
Christology and its ongoing theological significance.”39 According to John Donahue and Daniel Harrington, the O.T. laments provide some of the language and images for Mark’s descriptions of Jesus’ sufferings. The references to Psalms 42-43 and 22 at key moments in Mark’s narrative of Jesus’ Passion and death (14:34 and 15:34) suggest a powerful connection between the biblical laments and Jesus as “the man of sorrows.” Psalms 42-43 contain the elements that appear in individual laments: Complaints (42:9), confessions of faith (42:2), petitions for divine help (42:11), and references to thanksgiving sacrifices (43:4). 40 The Old Testament laments in the Psalms are linked to what Jesus has said (as Mark’s Jesus uses only sentences from the O.T. psalms as his own words in the final chapters) and done (as Mark’s Jesus suffers because of doing the right thing). Jesus is the “Son of Man” as “suffering Just Man”, but just as we have said before, it does not give a complete image of this title in the Passion Narrative, but it is going towards that.

At least two key questions come to our mind: Why is the “Son of Man” title more important than “Messiah, Son of God” and “Messiah, Son of David”? As far as we can see, the importance of “Son of Man” is highlighted in the simple fact that it is the only Christological title used by Jesus to himself. Mark’s narrator and even the heavenly voice use other titles that Mark’s Jesus doesn’t; main characters in the story use Christological titles that Jesus even denied such as “Son of David” (12:25). The Markan Jesus considers himself “Son of Man”, but why now is this Christological title chosen at this crucial moment in the gospel—the prayer scene in Gethsemane episode? 41 The passion narrative is the appropriate place to proclaim

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39 Donahue and Harrington, The Gospel of Mark, 413.
40 Ibid., 411.
41 Cf. P. Foster, “The Pastoral Purpose of Q’s Two-Stage Son of Man Christology,” Biblica 89, no.1 (2008): 81-91; and Bruce Chilton, review of The Solution to the ‘Son of Man’ Problem, by Maurice Casey, Biblica 90, no. 2 (2009): 290-293.
himself as “Son of Man” because this title personifies the biblical suffering images of the ‘Just One’ (Ps 42-43) or ‘righteous person’ (Ps 22). Mark’s narrator knew that hearers/readers cannot attain a holistic understanding of this title prior to and apart from the cross, a theology of the suffering combined with a theology of the glory; he knew that we need a process of perception. Once the “Messiah, Son of God”, the glorious messiahship proclaimed at the baptism and transfiguration, and “Messiah, Son of David”, the victorious messiahship carried in the disciples mind, are face to face at Gethsemane, with a third Christology which does not unfold completely the kind of Messiah Jesus is, the reader is prepared for a climatic revelation of the portrait of Jesus. Mark’s narrator, working in his brilliant oral style, progresses from baptism through Gethsemane to the cross, and brings us to a completed picture of Jesus’ Messiahship.
Scene 2: Jesus’ arrest (14:43-52)

If we imagine the Last Supper taking place at 6 p.m. “when it was evening” (14:17), Jesus would be arrested at midnight. This second scene is connected with the first through the sentence “while he was speaking”, an introduction which shows that Jesus’ opponents have not taken him by surprise, he was waiting for them, he is already prepared. Another aspect also prepared is the Markan atmosphere which is created by the use of the word seize, κρατέω; it runs throughout the narrative (14:44, 46, 49, 51). With the seizure of Jesus in Gethsemane, “the attempt to arrest κρατέω him, first mentioned in 12:12 is realized.”

Mark’s narrator presents many characters in this second scene, some of them are flat, predictable in their behaviour (crowd, disciples, bystanders, and the young man) others are round, unpredictable (Judas and Jesus). They are carrying their own perception of Jesus. We should notice that the arrest scene is not dealing with the matter of Jesus’ Messiahship but Jesus’ role in society. Let us explore the pictures of Jesus in his social role set out in this scene and a third image proclaimed by Jesus himself through the scriptures.

Jesus as λόγος

Two different characters have a similar perception of Jesus, the crowd and Judas. In his omniscience, Mark’s narrator speaks to us about instructions Judas gave earlier to the arresting party, the crowd. The crowd of people are neither the temple police nor the roman soldiers. They are not a rabble because they come with the authority of the chief priests, scribes and elders, the three groups who form part of the

42 Matera, Passion Narrative and Gospel Theologies, 24.
Sanhedrin, and “had stalked Jesus since his action in the temple.” The Crowd thus represents the Jewish high council, which is going to “play an important role” in Jesus’ passion (14:53, 55; 15:1, 3, 10, 11, 31). They were armed with swords and clubs and were not able to recognize Jesus; they needed a signal to arrest him. Those elements illustrate their Jesus’ picture. Jesus was considered a ληστής. “Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a ληστής?” (14:48). It does not only mean a vulgar robber, and a political revolutionary, but also “a sort of religiously motivated revolutionary who unsettled Palestine in the last century B.C.E. and the first century C.E.” Mark’s author uses ληστής two other times but in the meaning of vulgar robber rather than political revolutionary, namely, in “the cleansing of the temple, where Jesus does not say who the robbers are, but there is a strong implication that he is referring to the religious leaders (11:17) and at the crucifixion, where Jesus is crucified between two robbers (15:27).” We could conclude Jesus was seen as a brigand as well as a political revolutionary by the armed crowd at Gethsemane.

The other character with a similar image of Jesus is Judas, one of the twelve. Judas Iscariot, who was appointed from the beginning of Mark’s story as the one who was going to betray Jesus, is now handing him into sinners’ hands. Judas had arranged a signal with the crowd as if Jesus was a ‘dangerous ληστής’, a ‘perilous brigand’ who has to be taken by surprise and dragged under heavy guard. With his kiss, Judas has abandoned his discipleship completely because now “he is in full communion with those who are seeking to destroy Jesus.” The contrast is marked, “while he

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43 Senior, The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark, 80.
44 Matera, Passion Narrative and Gospel Theologies, 24.
45 Marcus, Mark 8-16, 998.
46 Matera, Passion Narrative and Gospel Theologies, 28.
47 Senior, The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark, 81.
betrays Jesus he shows his solidarity with his captors by working out an ‘agreed sign’ with the armed mob.”48 To be catalogued as a λῃστὴς by an unknown crowd is not so striking, but to be judged as a vulgar robber or political revolutionary by one of his inner disciples is completely shocking. It makes us remember two other surprising accusations against Jesus earlier in the story: Jesus was called “out of his mind” (3:21) by his relatives and “in the power of Beelzebub” (3:22) by the teachers of the Law who had come from Jerusalem. Mark’s Jesus responded to those accusations saying: "Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin”’ (Mark 3:28-29) The people had mistaken Jesus’ identity because they did not perceive that Jesus is the ‘eschatological agent’ of God’s salvation, the ‘giver of the Spirit’ and by doing so they were blaspheming against the Holy Spirit. Jesus’ depiction as mad and demoniac is terribly astounding just as is Judas horrible confession. While Jesus is arrested as a wanted brigand, Mark “invites us to make a choice. Who are the real criminals? Jesus or his persecutors?” 49

**Jesus as ἀββᾶ**

The dramatic irony of Mark’s narrator is easily recognizable in Judas’ greeting to Jesus. The narrator is tersely describing the scene, he says that Judas kissed and greeted Jesus with the title of ἀββᾶ. Jesus says and does nothing. The core of this event thus is in the irony. ἀββᾶ is used as an arranged signal to get a dangerous

man. Judas transformed “a sign of love into a signal for death.”\textsuperscript{50} He was a hypocrite but by doing so Mark’s narrator was placing in his lips another portrait of Jesus which depicts his role in society. Ῥαββί is “properly a form of address” and “then an honorary title for outstanding teachers of the law”.\textsuperscript{51} Only two disciples, Peter (9:5; 11:21) and Judas Iscariot, have used it to refer to Jesus, as a person of respect and their teacher. In Peter’s lips the Ῥαββί title is inadequate because he misunderstood Jesus’ transfiguration (9:5) and also it is a potential title (11:21) which shows that people respect Jesus but they are struggling to understand him. Ῥαββί is not just a title of honour by which the disciples acknowledge him as their teacher.

Mark’s narrator shows us in this scene that Jesus is not a man of violence, but of peace. He is not a ἔρημος but Ῥαββί. “Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me” (14:49a). Mark’s Jesus complains about the inadequate perception of his role between them. He wants to correct them as he had corrected his relatives for calling him “mad” (3:33-35); and as he had corrected the scribes for calling him “demoniac” (3:23-27).

Gethsemane’s second scene is not different; Jesus takes the opportunity to correct them as he did before. His own image as ἔρημος is an inappropriate portrait for him. He is mighty in word, as his teaching shows, and also mighty in deeds, as his miracles show. These demonstrate absolutely the contrary of what they are denouncing with their armed plan to arrest him. Jesus taught during the daytime. He did miracles in public places. His actions are not done in the darkness like the brigand. He is neither a dangerous robber, nor a political agitator, but a powerful

\textsuperscript{50} Senior, \textit{The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark}, 81.
\textsuperscript{51} Malbon, \textit{Mark’s Jesus}, 91.
teacher, “who did not need to disguise his teaching;” He is the authoritative interpreter of the Torah.

**Jesus as the Suffering Just Man.**

Jesus not only defended himself of the erroneous perception of his identity through the rejection of the use of violence, but also used the incident as a teaching moment of his social role in their midst. After his teaching Jesus’ role in the narrative is going to change. His character is going to pass from teacher-round to silent-flat. He is going to play a more passive part, “the sort of role he will assume for the remainder of the Gospel.” Even his speeches are going to decrease: “while he uttered about 80 words at the Last Supper (14:22-31), and 85 words in Gethsemane (14:32-42), he voices only 30 in the present scene (14:43-52), only about 20 at the “Jewish trial” (14:53-72), only 2 at the “Roman trial” (15:1-15) and then does not speak at all until his final words from the cross.” Once Jesus’ teaching has corrected them about their wrong perception of his identity and has exposed to them clearly his own accurate portrayal, Jesus goes further saying, "but let the scriptures be fulfilled"(14:49b). Mark’s Jesus had had the same attitude in the former scene, the prayer. Once the contrasting Messiahship as Son of God and as Son of David have been developed in the narrative, Mark’s Jesus went further introducing and explaining a third Christology, the Son of Man.

During the arrest, the second scene at Gethsemane, Mark’s Jesus quotes from the writings his kind of Messiahship. When he says “Let the scriptures be fulfilled”, he does not refer to specific O.T. texts but asserts that here is God’s will. Some

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52 Harrington, *What was Mark at?* 141.
54 Ibid., 983.
scholars have said that the term ‘scriptures’ points “not to some specific texts in which the moment of arrest is foreshadowed but to the entire Salvific intent of God.”\textsuperscript{55} And as Salvific plan, Jesus stands in “the long line of biblical figures who suffer for their fidelity to their commission to proclaim the word of God (e.g. Jeremiah; suffering servant of second Isaiah and Ezekiel).”\textsuperscript{56} This reference to the fulfilment of the scriptures is used by Mark’s Jesus to affirm that his suffering and death are in accordance with God’s will, a paradoxical will (9:12; 14:21). When the scriptures are fulfilled, Jesus’ identity is unveiled, the kind of Messiah he is. This reference to unspecified texts in the scriptures helps to illumine Mark’s portrayal of Jesus as the suffering Just One of God, abandoned and tormented by those he loved. The quotation from writings in Jesus’ mouth provides many biblical images of Jesus such as “the servant who gave his life in ransom for the many, the son of Man destined to triumph through the paradox of humiliation and death, the Just One betrayed but vindicated by a faithful God, the Messiah who in spite of rejection and death would drink the triumphant wine of the King’s banquet.”\textsuperscript{57} Throughout all these Jesus’ images we recognize the same pattern; he is the suffering one of God.

According to the narrative critical analysis of Mark’s passion narrative, concerning the scenes of the prayer and the arrest of Jesus in the Gethsemane episode, there are many portraits of Jesus: 3 different perceptions of his Messiahship in the prayer scene and 3 different interpretations of his social role in the arrest scene. Both scenes -prayer and arrest- draw a common pattern which opens up the implied author’s perception of Jesus. The prayer scene is the scenario where a third Christology (Son of Man) is raised up in the midst of the contention of other

\textsuperscript{55} Senior, \textit{The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark}, 83.
\textsuperscript{56} Donahue and Harrington, \textit{The Gospel of Mark}, 418.
\textsuperscript{57} Senior, \textit{The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark}, 83-84.
contrasting two (Son of God and Son of David) to clarify the real meaning of Jesus’ messiahship. Jesus as “Son of Man” affirms his obedient service to God’s will and so is given into the hands of sinners. On the other hand, the arrest scene is the scenario where 2 portraits of Jesus relating to his social role has been described (brigand or political rebel and Master) and a third perception of Jesus appears (suffering Just Man) to clarify his identity. Jesus as “suffering Just Man” emphasises his social role as a servant who gives his life in ransom for many. The theological and social roles of Jesus, his suffering and service, are interconnected in the Gethsemane episode which draws us closer and prepares us for the author’s own portrait of Jesus in the whole passion narrative.
CHAPTER 3

GOLGOTHA

Just as in Gethsemane, here everything becomes more specific. The spatial and temporal settings of the two scenes from this episode, the crucifixion and the death, slow the pace of the story down to make the reader appreciate better the dramatic situation of the Messiah.

“Golgotha” in Hebrew, “Skull” in Aramaic, “the place of a skull” in Greek, “Calvaria” in Latin and “Calvary” in English, was a place of death, for which a skull is a good symbol.¹ There is not just a symbolic explanation, but also a topographical one because the place is “a rounded knoll, rising from the surrounding surface,”² and imaginatively one can see there the shape of a skull.³ This particular knoll was outside the walls of Jerusalem at that time but near a “road leading to and from the city gates.”⁴

The temporal setting here is completely different from the rest of the Markan gospel because it is more specific. Mark’s narrator is recounting the events in a threefold division of the day: In the ‘third hour’, 9 a.m., “since the Roman day began at 6 a.m.,”⁵ the crucifixion took place; in the ‘sixth hour’, 12 noon, darkness fell over the land; and in the ‘ninth hour’, 3 p.m., Jesus gave up his spirit. This Markan threefold scheme of the temporal setting is to indicate the importance of the event that is taking place and to underline the solemnity and divine purposefulness of Jesus’

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⁵ Marcus, Mark 8-16, 1043.
crucifixion which “implies that this dark epoch is nevertheless under the firm control of an all-powerful God.” According to Mark’s author, hearers and readers must not be afraid because there is hope after all since God’s finger is behind these horrendous events and we also must take heed of the Christology exposed in the different portraits of Jesus in Golgotha.

The style of the Markan author is “sparse and understated, giving only the essential facts,” in the Golgotha episode. The crucifixion and death scenes are described in a “remarkably concise and objective style.” Mark’s narrator describes them with simplicity, without any emotional commentary or detail of the horrors of this unjust punishment. He just says: “And they crucified him” (15:24a). Nevertheless, crucifixion is strongly emphasized in this episode, “indeed, the verb σταυρόω (to crucify) occurs five times (15:20, 24, 25, 27, 32) in these scenes of the Golgotha episode, and the noun σταυρός (cross) appears three times (15:21, 30, 32).” Golgotha is one of Mark’s “most skillful narratives, catching up the major motifs of Christology and discipleship that have run throughout the Gospel and bringing them to their final expression.” For our interest, we are going to follow the major Christological motifs gathered in the scenes, taking a narrative critical analysis of the two scenes in Golgotha: the crucifixion and death of Jesus.

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6 Ibid., 1050.
7 Donahue and Harrington, The Gospel of Mark, 444.
8 Ibid., 444.
9 Marcus, Mark 8-16, 1049.
Scene 1: The crucifixion (15:20b-32)

Jesus as King of the Jews.

The placard (15:26) which was “required at official Roman executions,” 11 is one of the most important elements in the crucifixion scene because it shows us clearly one side of the coin, the ‘Roman’ reason for the execution.

The placard over the cross cites Jesus’ crime: “King of the Jews”, an outsider Roman translation of Messiah. It had the intention “of warning Jews against following other charismatic leaders with messianic pretensions and of telling them that this is what happens to such persons,” 12 and even more, of terrifying Jesus own followers. Some interpreters think that the title ‘King of the Jews’ “has at last found its authentic place of proclamation – fastened to the cross of Jesus.” 13 But from our narrative reading, we think that this title has not been placed here as a title of confession but of accusation. The context is not the climactic moment to proclaim a confession. The flat characters in Mark’s story do profess faith and the hearers and readers are just listening in a less attentive way in this dramatic scene. We as hearers and readers are shocked and just grasping the whole situation. Other interpreters have said that the “inscription over Jesus’ cross is ironic.” 14 But our narrative critical analysis of the crucifixion scene reveals that there is a low theological conception of Jesus in the titles proclaimed there. The soldiers’ portrait of Jesus is as a ‘false’ “king of the Jews”. Here the portrait of Jesus as a ‘king’ does not suit in Mark’s Gospel because the absolute perception of who Jesus is goes beyond the category of kingship; it goes further. Mark’s concept of Jesus leadership “does not fit into the type of the

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12 Donahue and Harrington, The Gospel of Mark, 442.
14 Marcus, Mark 8-16, 1050.
Jesus’ crucifixion shows that he is certainly not royal. Our conclusion is that Mark’s narrator, in this particular scene, is not interested in proclaiming Jesus as King of the Jews. His interest is in another depiction, the ‘Suffering Son of Man’ who was sentenced as “King of the Jews”.

The Roman authorities and soldiers have manifested their viewpoint of Jesus in their deeds and mocking words. “King of the Jews” is a title used by Pilate and repeated only by the Roman soldiers and in the inscription placed on the cross (15:2, 9, 12, 18, 26). They executed Jesus as a guerrilla, a laughingstock, a political rebel, a charismatic leader, in sum as a false king. When they are calling Jesus “King of the Jews”, they are not speaking confessionally, but sarcastically and jokingly. This is a royal title rather than a Christological one. And as royal title, everyone who uses it in this context utters it in derision rather than that in confession. Mark’s narrator does not depict Jesus as a ‘king’; but he reminds us that the object of our faith in Jesus as the Son of God goes beyond being a king.

**Jesus as Messiah, King of Israel.**

Jesus was not only crucified because he was considered a dangerous political rebel; that was just the ‘Roman’ reason. The threefold mockery of Jesus on the cross is developed by Mark’s narrator as a rhetorical device to show the ‘Jewish’ reason for the execution. *Here* is the flip side of this scene. He applies the rhetorical feature called “progressive sections in series of three” through three flat characters: the passersby, the Jewish leaders and the two robbers.

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The passersby (15:29-30): They knew little about Jesus but accused him of being a false prophet. They bring up “the first charge raised against Jesus in the trial before the Sanhedrin (14:58),”\textsuperscript{16} and with the misconception of Jesus as a ‘demolition-construction worker’, they see the fact of his crucifixion as a proof of his failure. His prophecies about the temple (11:15-17; 13:2; 14:58) were false. He is a false prophet.

The chief priest and teachers of the law (15:31-32a): They are the “prime movers in bringing about the execution of Jesus (11:18,27; 14:1, 10, 43, 53, 54, 55, 60, 61, 63, 66; 15:1, 3, 10, 11).”\textsuperscript{17} They bring back “the second charge made against Jesus in the trial before the Sanhedrin (14:61),”\textsuperscript{18} and with their mocking words against Jesus they use the title “King of Israel” instead of “King of the Jews”, a change of point of view to a more insider conception of the Messiah but also a deeper misperception of who Jesus is. They laugh at Jesus and with this attitude they demonstrate a perception of Jesus as blasphemous\textsuperscript{19}, a false Messiah. Though they admit that Jesus has saved others (15:31b) outside Jerusalem, it is crucial that he cannot save himself from death, beside Jerusalem. When mockers ask Jesus to “come down from his cross” (15:32), they are expressing their stubbornness and misperception of Jesus’ Messiahship, of his mission among them. The separation of Jesus from his cross as a proof to believe is the most contradictory sign they can ask, because it goes against Messiahship itself. It is the cruel proof for them that they never did understand him: The crucifixion was the proof of his false Messiahship. Among them there is no conversion to such a Messiahship. They retain their own image of the

\textsuperscript{16} Donahue and Harrington, \textit{The Gospel of Mark}, 441.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 444.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 444.
\textsuperscript{19} However, “Blasphemy”, in Mark’s gospel, is attributed to misunderstanding God’s plan: “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save or to kill?” (3:4)
Messiah. Their attitude is reflected in the attitude of the mockers in Psalm 22: “But I am a worm, and not human; scorned by others, and despised by the people. All who see me mock at me; they make mouths at me, they shake their heads; "Commit your cause to the LORD; let him deliver-- let him rescue the one in whom he delights!" (Ps 22:6-8). Mark’s author explains their attitude as fulfilling the mockers in Psalm 22, and proclaims Jesus as the suffering Just One who is mocked. In the Trial they have already seen and heard what Jesus had to say, but their appetite was not satisfied and now the authorities ask to see so that they can believe. This ironic situation underlines the fact that the authentic point of view is the one which looks at the Crucified Jesus.

Robbers (15:32b): The two crucified robbers with him weren’t robbers at all. As we have seen before, the meaning for ληστής is more than robber or brigand, it can also mean a political rebel. Besides, we should keep in mind that neither theft nor robbery was a capital crime in Roman law. Their insults against Jesus “may be a historical memory” and emphasize that Jesus is not one of them; he is not a ληστής, because he does not receive their sympathy. It also highlights Jesus loneliness, without friends he is “a solitary righteous man closely surrounded on all sides by enemies.”

It is similar to the Psalms about the Righteous sufferer’s confession: “For dogs are all around me; a company of evildoers encircles me. My hands and feet have shriveled; I can count all my bones” (Ps 22:16-17).

After this narrative critical analysis we can certainly affirm the Jewish reason for Jesus execution: He is a blasphemer who proclaims false prophecies and Messiahship. Those mockeries had the intention of “ridiculing the idea that Jesus is

20 Marcus, Mark 8-16, 1044.
21 Brown, Death of the Messiah, 999.
the ‘King of Israel’. While the blasphemous Jesus is pinned to the cross, all of them confirm their final verdict by mocking him. They see on the cross a false prophet and a false Messiah precisely because he is crucified and cannot come down from it. But the irony here it is that Jesus’ opponents will never be able to see Jesus as he truly is “unless they can see him on, not off, the cross.” The reviling by three groups in turn “underlines the lonely plight of Jesus, the Suffering Righteous One.” Once the characters, hearers and readers recognize the crucifixion as a true sign and not a contradictory one of Jesus’ Messiahship, we are on the way to unfolding his real identity.

As we have seen, the absolute perception of who Jesus is goes beyond the category of kingship. The mockery really portrays Jesus as abandoned by his friends and followers and opposed by the rest, as the ‘Suffering Son of Man’. When all eyes and expectations were turned to a “Messiah without a cross,” Mark’s author points out the real Messiah who personifies the ‘Suffering Son of Man’, redefining the title. “Messiah” or “Christ” is only applied to Jesus four times in Mark’s Gospel: The Markan narrator’s confession (1,1); Peter’s confession (8:29); Jesus’ trial before the high priest (14:61); and the mocking of Jesus by Jewish leaders (15:32). From the beginning we know that Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus is Christ, but only throughout the narration of the Markan story do we realize the kind of Messiah he is. In these final mockeries Mark’s narrator attributes to Jesus’ opponents the same attitudes as

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22 Marcus, Mark 8-16, 1045.
23 Senior, The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark, 121.
25 Senior, The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark, 121.
“those directed against the righteous sufferer in the psalms of lament (Pss 35:21; 40:15; 70:3). Mark portrays Jesus as this innocent sufferer.”

Scene 2: The death (15:33-41)

Jesus as true Son of God.

The second scene of the Golgotha episode has a double dynamic: supernatural and natural events leading up to the death and coming from it as reactions. The death of Mark’s Jesus will not occur suddenly; Mark’s narrator firstly has prepared the context for this moment, readers and hearers are conscious that there is no chance for Jesus to have a lucky escape. Although his death is unjust, we are expecting it. One of the events which is leading up to the death is supernatural, “Darkness fell over the whole land and lasted until three o’clock” (15:34). It seems that Mark’s author wants the reader’s imagination to associate an unusual astronomical event with the coming death of Jesus. Looking backward in Mark’s story, the darkening of the sun was described as part of the eschatological disasters (13:24) and could be connected to the O.T. “On that day, says the Lord GOD, I will make the sun go down at noon, and darken the earth in broad daylight” (Amos 8:9-10). Another event which leads up to the death is Jesus’ cry: “ἐλωὶ ἐλωὶ ἱλασθήτη” (15:34). The silence of Jesus is broken by a final cry. Jesus addresses his Father with a different appellative than the one used at Gethsemane. “ἐλωὶ”, the Aramaic word for “My God”, is evoked by Jesus instead of “ἀββα.”27 Jesus’ cry is a verse from the opening verse of Psalm 22, which is “the prayer of a righteous person who has suffered greatly but has been vindicated by God.”28 Psalm 22 is not the only psalm referring to the laments of the righteous sufferer, there are others such as Psalms 6,31,69,71,130. Mark’s author thus could have selected it because it had previously been alluded to in the story, namely, the division of Jesus’ garments (15:24) related with “they divide my clothes among

themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots” (Ps 22:18) and the mockery of passersby (15:29-32) with “but I am a worm, and not human; scorned by others, and despised by the people. All who see me mock at me; they make mouths at me, they shake their heads; Commit your cause to the LORD; let him deliver-- let him rescue the one in whom he delights!” (Ps 22:6-8). Jesus’ cry to God is a proof that the “abandonment and desertion are juxtaposed with the Scriptures,” 29 that his suffering and death are in God’s plan.

In addition to proving that Jesus’ coming death is God’s plan, the final words of Mark’s Jesus are an expression of faith, not of despair, just as it happened in the prayer scene at Gethsemane. When Mark’s Jesus was most silent, the Scriptures spoke up for him. By using the first words of Psalm 22, Mark’s author is indicating only the beginning of a long prayer. If we look at the composition of Psalm 22, we will realize that it has two parts. Its “first part (vv. 1-21a) consists of alternating laments over present sufferings (vv. 1-2, 6-8, 12-18) and expressions of trust in God (vv. 3-5, 9-11, 19-21a); and its second part (vv. 21b-31) confirms that God has indeed acted.” 30 The whole of Psalm 22 is not one of lament, but of trust. Jesus’ cry seems to be a despairing lament but it is not; on the contrary, his cry is a trustful appeal to God. Indeed the anguish of the Markan Jesus is real. He is completely alone inasmuch as there is abandonment in every social group he belonged to. His compatriot group has conspired against him (14:1-2), has raised up false witnesses against him (14:56) and condemned him (14:64; 15:9-14). The group of the condemned at Calvary has insulted him (15:29-32). The group of followers has mocked him, both Jews (15:29) and Gentiles (15:18). Members of his inner circle of

friends and co-workers have betrayed him (14:43-47), denied him (14:66-72), deserted him (14:50) and fled. His acquaintances from Nazareth have taken offense at him (6:3). Even more, his family circle has accused him as being “out of his mind” (3:21). The whole of Jesus’ life, from the beginning until now, is full of abandonment. When Jesus, crucified on that cross, looked backward, he realized that he is abandoned even by his Father. This last abandonment “contradicts conventional notions of royalty; kings were supposed to have God as their helper, not their foe.”

From the absence of God, Jesus cried and his cry “is characterized by trust.” Jesus’ cry shows us his “faith in God in the midst of abandonment and suffering.” If this cry is considered as a cry of despair, we must consider that question some scholars have suggested “Why would Mark write a “Gospel” (good news) about a tragic figure whose life ends in total despair? Such a work might qualify as a tragedy or a pathetic biography, but hardly as a Gospel.” Therefore, Jesus’ cry is a cry of trust which portrait Jesus, the “Son of God,” as the incarnation of the suffering Just One, who trusts in God no matter what.

Those supernatural and natural events led us up to the death of Jesus. Markan readers and hearers are in the highest peak of the Passion narrative, “the first extant narrative of Jesus’ crucifixion, and also the first narrative of any hero’s death by crucifixion.” Mark’s Passion narrative is a gruesome story about suffering and death through a shameful punishment like the crucifixion. Mark’s Jesus dies crucified apparently as a ‘guerrilla’, between two political rebels, with the Roman intention of terrorizing the population, and above all future rebels against the empire.

31 Marcus, Mark 8-16, 1064.
32 Cf. Matera, Passion Narrative and Gospel Theologies, 46.
33 Senior, The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark, 123.
34 Donahue and Harrington, The Gospel of Mark, 450.
35 Mark Goodacre, Trial and Death of Jesus in Mark, 34.
Mark’s Jesus dies crucified seemingly as a ‘false Messiah’, between the sinners, with the Jewish intention of demonstrating his blasphemy. But according to the Markan author’s intention, Mark’s Jesus dies crucified truly as the ‘suffering Just One’, who screams and expires, in a deep agony, without control over his death, apparently powerless. This “Son of Man” “who would give his life for the many (10:45), who would offer a broken body and blood poured out (14:22-24), who would lose his life to save it (9:35), experienced an inglorious death.” Nevertheless, Jesus’ death doesn’t underestimate his former cry of trust; his life could be broken but not his trust in God.

Taking the supernatural (darkness) and natural (Jesus’ cry) events which are leading up to his hideous death, into consideration, the panorama of the Golgotha episode is of abandonment. Mark’s narrator tries to show that in spite of Jesus’ cry of trust, a bleak landscape remains here. That is why this second scene of the Golgotha episode is not over, there is also another dynamic, as we have said above, where other supernatural and natural events are coming from Jesus’ death as reactions “which transform the bleak landscape into a scene of revelation.” The first consequence of Jesus’ death is the ripping of the Temple veil, a supernatural reaction. Mark’s narrator does not specify which of the two curtains was ripped and according to scholars there were two curtains in the temple, one which separated the “Holy of holies,” a place which could be entered once a year on the feast of Yom Kippur and only by the High Priest, from the holy place (Ex 26:31-35) while the other

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36 The way in which Jesus screams is unusual, since a crucified person normally died of asphyxia, and probably would not have had enough breath to expire with a loud cry (cf. Joel Marcus, Mark 8-16 The Anchor Yale Bible, Volume 27A, 1065).
37 Senior, The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark, 125.
38 Marcus, Mark 8-16, 1066.
hung at the “entrance” of the Temple (Ex 26:37). The Markan narrator’s lack of
detail is a proof that his interest is in showing that the supernatural consequence of
Jesus’ death carries a revelatory meaning. The torn curtain of the old Temple made
by human hands indicates that in Jesus’ death God not only “has opened definitively
the way between heaven and earth through Jesus’ death on the cross,” but also
that God has brought to an end the cult of the old Temple, which allowed access
only to selected pure people, and forbade it to the rest of the humanity. It indicates
that God has fashioned a new temple, not made by human hands, one which
renders “God’s glory accessible to all humanity,” Jews and Gentiles, men and
women.

The ripping of the veil is consonant with the high priest’s act of “tearing his garment”
in anger at Jesus’ blasphemy, by accepting that he is the Christ, the Son of the
Blessed One (14:61-63) and also with the baptism of Jesus, where the “heavens are
ripped apart” and a heavenly voice declares him to be “Son of God” (1:10-11). In
those parallels to the “ripping of the temple veil” there is a common disclosure, and
this one is not an exception, because now it is the time for the centurion’s
confession, a natural event coming from Jesus’ death. It is not a coincidence that
the first human being’s confession of Jesus as “Son of God” comes from a
Centurion, a Gentile Roman soldier, who is in charge of Jesus’ crucifixion and
perhaps is a polytheist. There is thus a strong nuance of irony in this character that
correctly identifies Jesus at last. Following the pattern in the Markan story, to make a

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39 Matera, Passion Narrative and Gospel Theologies, 47.
40 Donahue and Harrington, The Gospel of Mark, 452.
42 Matera, Passion Narrative and Gospel Theologies, 47.
correct confession and an accurate proclamation of Jesus’ identity, every character in the Markan story must first have a transparent and real recognition of Jesus. The Centurion recognizes Jesus once he has “seen how Jesus died and heard the cry he gave” (15:39). Unlike the first cry of Jesus on the cross, a cry composed with harsh words, which was misunderstood by the bystanders who heard “Elijah,” instead of “Eloi”; the second cry of Jesus, a wordless cry, was well understood by one bystander, the Centurion, who recognizes Jesus’ real identity at that climatic moment of the Markan story and thus is ready to proclaim Jesus as “Son of God” (15:39).

The location of the Centurion and other characters before the cross is also relevant. The bystanders, who can listen to Jesus’ words and even give him something to drink (15:35-36) are beside the cross in an apathetic attitude to Jesus’ cause inasmuch as they have been mockering Jesus. The women, who are “watching from a distance” (15:40) are far away from the cross in a sympathetic attitude to his cause inasmuch as they have been following Jesus when he was in Galilee (15:41a), serving him there (15:41b), and going up with him to Jerusalem (15:41c). Women’s sympathy to Jesus’ cause is so profound that they are the only followers who remain with Jesus at his death, “taking the place of the disciples and even doing what they have failed to do.” They, the women, will witness not only Jesus death, but also his burial (15:42-47) and will visit the empty tomb (16:1-8), experiencing his resurrection.

The Centurion, who was “standing in front of him” (15:39), is in the middle of the bystanders and the women. Although the Centurion is in charge of the execution, his attitude to Jesus cause is closer to that of the women as he is placed by Mark’s narrator “alongside the women after Jesus’ death, not alongside the mockers before

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44 Elijah was expected to precede the Messiah, but according to Mark’s Jesus that prophecy was already fulfilled because Elijah came in the person of John the Baptist (9:13).
45 Matera, Passion Narrative and Gospel Theologies, 49.
Another connection between them appears when we see the contrast of ‘distance from the cross’ and ‘nearness to the cross’, resonates with the fact that the ones who are distant from the cross will fail to announce the message of the resurrection, but the centurion, the stranger, who is close to the cross, is the actual agent who announces the resurrection.

As a result of this narrative critical analysis of the second scene at Golgotha episode, exploring its supernatural and natural events leading up to the death and reactions coming from it, we have discovered a strong Markan emphasis on Jesus’ isolation complemented with an emblematic Markan Christological revelation: Jesus’ real identity is revealed uniquely and exclusively at his death on the cross. The depiction of Mark’s Jesus from the cross reveals him as a different Messiah, neither a military Messiah, Son of David, nor an glorious Messiah, Son of God, but a suffering Messiah, “his way is not that of military might or political power, but rather the way of redemptive suffering;” Jesus is Son of God as suffering human being. Mark’s Jesus messiahship and divine sonship are fully revealed at the cross. The whole of Mark’s Gospel “has been leading up to this point.”

Before Jesus’ death, all the supernatural and natural events are dominated by abandonment; afterwards, by revelation. Events coming from Jesus’ death are transforming the dramatic scene of isolation into revelation. The torn curtain and centurion’s confession are apocalyptic events revealing Jesus as truly Son of God and with this revelation emerges a new conception of the O.T. covenant, an eschatological end of time. Those revelatory events broadcast a new sacred place

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46 Marcus, Mark 8-16, 1059.
49 Ibid.
instead of the temple, where the divine glory was believed to dwell, “the community who lives in Jesus’ name.” 50 This unveiling secret, inspired from the torn curtain and centurion’s confession, is “a sign of the community’s future mission.” 51 From now on, it is not God who lives in the temple, but the people who live in God.

Taking the narrative critical analysis of the crucifixion and death scenes into consideration, the Golgotha episode is drawn as the cruelest moment of his suffering where Jesus’ real identity is unveiled. The portraits of Jesus depicted here are mainly proving that Jesus is not a “King” in any sense, neither king of the Jews nor king of Israel; He has not to be served by his subjects, on the contrary, he came to serve and to give his life as ransom for many. The crucifixion scene portrays Jesus as an innocent ‘Suffering Son of Man’, a suffering servant whose identity goes beyond the category of kingship. The second scene, the death of Jesus, portrays a more direct depiction of Jesus’ identity. The supernatural (darkness and ripping of the curtain) and natural (Jesus’ cry and the centurion’s confession) events are leading up to and proceeding from his death and they are emphasising his abandonment to highlight the final revelation, Jesus as Son of God, dead on a cross. Although this proclamation is the last depiction of Jesus identity in the Markan story, which reveals fully his divine sonship and messiahship, it is not the climatic Christology. Jesus as Son of God appears here confirming the other proclamation professed in Gethsemane and structuring the passion narrative. The beginning (Gethsemane) and the end (Golgotha) are pointing to the trial episode framing it. We are on the way to unfolding his real identity in the midst of the story, at the trial of Jesus before the High Priest.

50 Senior, The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark, 128.
51 Ibid., 131.
CONCLUSION

The narrative critical analysis of the first and final episodes of the passion narrative, Gethsemane with its 2 scenes (the prayer and the arrest), and Golgotha with 2 scenes (the crucifixion and the death) as well, has unveiled an interesting pattern occurring at the beginning and the end, a pattern that is confirmed in the middle, in the Trial episode, and that pattern is echoed in the whole Markan story.

The narrative analysis of the text has shown its strength in establishing the thought of the Markan narrator about Jesus. The Markan Jesus’ portrait is presented in each scene of the Passion in a multicolor picture where various elements show an aspect of his real identity. The narrative analysis of Gethsemane and Golgotha episodes has shown that none of the titles stand on their own, but need to be interpreted in relation to each other, an interaction of glorious triumph and service. There is a pattern, a counterbalance between power and service, between glory and suffering. Mark’s theology is narration which is totally consistent with the statement of the main characters, such as the Roman centurion.

The Centurion’s confession is not only the first human being’s confession of Jesus as “Son of God”, but it is also one of four major confessions of Jesus as “Son of God,” which structure Mark’s Gospel like a sandwich: the first (introduction) and the last (death) enfold the second (baptism) and third (transfiguration). The two confessions at the baptism (1:11) and transfiguration (9:7) are proclaimed by God, but the first acclamation at the introduction (1:1) and last confession at the death (15:39) are proclaimed by Markan characters, the implied narrator and the Centurion. The last confession is underlining a terrible silence from God and it is
revealing that the Centurion, a human being, echoes God and Mark's implied narrator confession.

It is interesting to explore this interaction between glory and service also in the heavenly voice's confession of Jesus as the “Beloved Son” at the beginning of the first half of the Markan story (baptism 1:11) and at the beginning of the second half (Transfiguration 9:7). The first “Beloved son” title is addressed only to Jesus. And so, it is only heard by Jesus and the implied hearer/reader: “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased” (1:11). Here the title serves as recognition of Jesus’ divine sonship and it serves to express God’s perspective. Jesus is “Beloved Son” but also “Servant”, inasmuch as the text echoes Isaiah’s first servant song: “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations” (Isaiah 42:1). Jesus is “Son of God” as well as “Servant of God”. Thus, the first authoritative statement of Jesus' identity by God joins “son” and “servant”.

The second “Beloved son”, at the beginning of the second half of Mark's story, is addressed to the disciples: “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!” (Mark 9:7) Here the title also serves as recognition of Jesus' divine sonship and it goes with a command which endorses the teaching of Jesus. From now on, the teaching of Mark's Jesus will be about “service” and will be articulated into the three sections by the passion’s predictions. 1st prediction: the way to follow Jesus (8:34-38); the question about Elijah (9:11-13); the way to exorcize an evil spirit (9:14-29). 2nd prediction: the question about the greatest disciple (9:33-41); the way to deal with causes to sin (9:42-50); the question about divorce (10:1-12); the way to enter into the kingdom of God (10:13-16); the way to have eternal life (10:17-27); the question
about the reward for Jesus’ followers (10:28-31). 3rd prediction: the way to be the first among them (10:35-45).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prediction</th>
<th>Misunderstanding of Disciples</th>
<th>Teaching on Discipleship</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Prediction</td>
<td>And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him (8:32)</td>
<td>the way to follow Jesus (8:34-38)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the question about Elijah (9:11-13)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the way to exorcize an evil spirit (9:14-29)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Prediction</td>
<td>But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him (9:32)</td>
<td>the question about the greatest disciple (9:33-41)</td>
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<td>the way to deal with causes to sin (9:42-50)</td>
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<td>the question about the reward for Jesus’ followers (10:28-31)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Prediction</td>
<td>James and John said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory” (10:37)</td>
<td>the way to be the first among them (10:35-45)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The whole teaching of Jesus has “service” as the common denominator in the threefold division by the prediction of his passion. His message shows him as a powerless “servant” who gives his life “as a ransom for many” (10:45).⁵² That is the teaching that the apostles are invited to listen to by the heavenly voice. Taking everything into consideration, the two heavenly voices’ confessions of Jesus as the “Beloved Son” have the same pattern: He is the servant of God with, whom God is well pleased (Is 42:1) and to whom disciples must listen for his teaching about service.

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When the title “Son of God” or “Beloved Son” is linked with service, it acquires nuances of glory and suffering at the same time and with the same importance. This happens also with the “Son of Man” title which put in interaction glory and suffering throughout the Markan story. That pattern unfolded in Gethsemane and Golgotha is confirmed in the middle of the passion narrative, in the trial episode, where Jesus, for the first time, affirms his identity openly:

“Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?” Jesus said, “I am; and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power,’ and ‘coming with the clouds of heaven’” (Mark 14:61-62)

This fragment is taken to be the core text of Mark’s Christology. Jesus first public confession of his Messiahship as “Son of God”, before the high priest question, is affirmed with an assured statement “I am” (14:62a). However, Mark’s Jesus does not accept this title as it is, he redefines it by affirming his identity as “Son of God” solely under these circumstances which echoes the assault on the Suffering Just One of Israel (Ps 22; Is 50:6) and by modifying its nuance with the prophecy of the “Son of Man”, a promise of triumph -exaltation and victorious return- in the midst of the suffering. The “Son of Man’s” prophecy “consists of two scriptural texts”.

The LORD says to my lord, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool” (Psalm 110:1)

The “Son of Man” seated at the right hand of the Power recalls the first verses of a royal psalm which illustrates the fact that the anointed has power over humanity. This first session of Jesus’ answer exalts him Jesus as “Son of Man”, seated at the right hand of his Father.


As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him (Daniel 7:13)

The coming back of the “Son of Man” with the clouds of heaven around him echoes the Danielic episode which refers to the victorious returning of an eschatological judgment figure. This second and final session of Jesus’ answer underlines return at the end of the time.

Suffering and triumph are combined in the title “Son of Man”. On one side, at the beginning of the Markan story, Jesus, “Son of Man,” is the one who forgives sins and has power over the Sabbath. He is the glorified “Son of Man” with power on earth. On the other side, at the end, Jesus is the one who will be exalted at the right hand of the Father and will return in glory to judge. He is also the glorified “Son of Man” with power in heaven. And in the middle of those glorious connotations of the title “Son of Man”, the threefold prediction of Jesus’ passion appears, “Son of Man” who has to suffer and rise again. Overall “Son of Man” title redefines the traditional designation for “Messiah” and the “Son of God”. Jesus confesses that he is the Messiah, Son of God, but a different kind of Messiah, his Messiahship must be understood as “Son of Man,” suffering human being. With this new understanding of Jesus’ identity, the implied readers/hearers who knew that Jesus was the “Christ, Son of God,” from the beginning of Mark’s Gospel by the Markan narrator’s commentary, are now taught by the lips of Jesus, the kind of Messiah he is, his real and total identity. Jesus is the “Messiah”, but a different Messiah. Jesus is “Messiah”, but beyond being king, “Son of David”, he is “Son of God” as suffering righteous man. The interpretation of “Son of God” as suffering human being brings together opposite nuances of Jesus, the exaltation and suffering.
The trial of Jesus before the high priest and the Sanhedrin, where having been accused of his blasphemous teaching and asked about his identity, Jesus acknowledged his identity by modifying their conception of Messiahship, is the perfect narrative scenario to tell readers/hearers who Jesus really is. The pattern confirmed by the central episode of the trial actually affects the whole Markan story. Mark’s Jesus had modified the understanding of a Messianic title before in the Markan story. There were many places where Jesus modified it. One of them is when Peter confessed “You are the Messiah” (8:29); he was corrected by Jesus ordering him not to tell anyone about it and teaching him the kind of Messiah he was, the “Son of Man”, predicting for the first time his passion before entering into Jerusalem. The other redefinition about the Messiah is located in the temple, where Jesus, after entering into Jerusalem, was teaching and asked them: "How can the scribes say that the Messiah is the son of David?" (12:35). It shows us that from Galilee to Jerusalem Jesus had tried to change their conception of Messiahship, he did it implicitly by deeds and words, but his own explicit auto-proclamation as Messiah, Son of God, Suffering human being, was done from Gethsemane to Golgotha, in the words and deeds of his passion- a person who in spite of humiliation and death will be seated at the right hand of the Father and will come back in glory with the clouds of heaven around him.

In conclusion, we have seen a pattern by reviewing the titles used by some characters in the Gethsemane (beginning) and Golgotha (end) episodes. The pattern is that each of the titles modifies the other: Son of God, Messiah, Son of David, Son of Man. We have seen that this pattern is confirmed in the explicit statement of Jesus in the trial narrative (middle episode). This confirmed pattern seems to indicate that the mystery of the person of Jesus goes beyond any one title, that his real identity is
not limited to one specific Christological title. However, these titles in Mark’s story reflect and transmit several aspects of Jesus: the aspects of fulfilment of the Old Testament (Messiah); the aspect of God present in the world (Son of God); the aspect of service and also the eschatological aspect of returning (multifaceted Son of Man). Through resonating shades of meanings behind these titles, the Markan portrait of Jesus is presented in a very nuanced and sophisticated Christology.
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