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Jesus the Shepherd: A Narrative-Critical Study of Mark 6:30-44

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By

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Jesus the Shepherd: A Narrative-Critical Study of Mark 6:30-44

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Although there have been a number of important studies in the recent past concerning Mark's first feeding story, the only miracle story of Jesus recorded by all four gospels (Matt 14:13-21; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-15), there has not been a thorough and comprehensive narrative-critical analysis on the response of the implied audience to Mark's uses of the OT allusions in 6:30-44. This study investigates the literary elements such as setting, character, and plot within the passage to illustrate how the audience is expected to respond to the OT allusions and how the story functions within the Gospel of Mark as a whole.

Chapter One provides a brief survey of literature on the state of current research concerning Mark's first feeding narrative. Chapter Two employs the redactional-critical method to analyze the Greek text. It shows that the author of Mark has reworked his traditional sources to achieve his theological and literary goals. Chapter Three focuses on the issue of intertextuality of Mark's first feeding story. The analysis of three examples of OT allusions and an intertextual reading of Mark 6:30-44 and 2 Kgs 4:42-44 demonstrate that both the author and the audience of Mark shared a similar literary and cultural background. The audience was able to identify the OT allusions and the miraculous feeding narrative type-scene from the OT Elijah-Elisha narrative cycle. Chapter Four is a full-scale study of Mark's first feeding story using narrative-critical analysis. It shows that there are two storylines in Mark's first feeding story: one dealing with the interaction and conflict between Jesus and the disciples and the other dealing

with the tension and interaction between Jesus and the crowd. The narrator has skillfully woven these two storylines together and created suspense, expectation, conflict, and resolution for the audience. Chapter Five concludes the investigation with a summary of the dissertation and indicates its contributions to the interpretation of Mark 6:30-44.

This dissertation has fulfilled the need of applying the narrative-critical method to interpret Mark's first feeding story as a narrative unit within its literary context. The major themes that emerge from this story are the miraculous feeding in the wilderness, the compassionate shepherd, the eschatological banquet, and the regrouping of God's people. Although Mark's first feeding story is episodic in nature, it fits into the overall kerygmatic program of the evangelist. The audience has heard the story at a key point structurally within the larger narrative of the Gospel of Mark. Through the deeds and teachings of Jesus, the audience has received a vivid and lively Jesus as the God-sent compassionate shepherd who seeks, gathers, and tends God's people in the wilderness.

This dissertation by Jonathan Bi Fan Cai fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in Biblical Studies approved by John Paul Heil, S.S.D. as Director, and by Hellen Mardaga, S.T.D., and Francis T. Gignac, S.J., D.Phil. as Readers.

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To My Father Cai Xin Sheng and Mother Luo Jia Yi

獻給我的父親蔡忻生和母親羅家儀

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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	D. N. Freedman et al. (eds.), <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BDAG	W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich (3d ed.; rev. by F. W. Danker), <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the NT</i>
BDF	F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and R. W. Funk, <i>A Greek Grammar of the NT</i>
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium
BNTC	Black's NT Commentaries
BSac	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CGTC	Cambridge Greek Testament Commentaries
CR:BS	<i>Currents in Research: Biblical Studies</i>
HTKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
Int	<i>Interpretation</i>
JAAR	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JR	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	JSNT, Supplement Series
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	JSOT, Supplement Series
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LTT	Library of Theological Translations
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	<i>New International Version</i>
NLH	<i>New Literary History</i>
NovT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	NovT, Supplements
NRSV	<i>New Revised Standard Version</i>
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
SacPag	Sacra Pagina
SBL	Studies in Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series

SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
<i>TCGNT</i>	B. M. Metzger, <i>A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament</i>
<i>TDNT</i>	G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds.), <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

Chapter One

Introduction

The feeding of the five thousand in Mark 6:30-44 is the only miracle story of Jesus that is found in all four gospels (Matt 14:13-21; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-15). The story in Mark is straightforward: after the disciples' missionary trip, Jesus wanted his disciples to go with him to a "wilderness place" so that they may have a quiet meal together and rest for a while (vv. 30-31). But as people found out this, they came from nearby towns on foot and got there before Jesus and his disciples who came by boat (vv. 32-33). When Jesus saw the large crowd, he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd and he began to teach them many things (v. 34). By now it was late, and the disciples wanted to send the crowd away to get their own food (vv. 35-36). Jesus commanded them to feed the crowd but the disciples argued that they did not have the funds to purchase food for such a large crowd (v. 37). When he found out the dire situation about the food supply (v. 38), he ordered the crowd to sit down in groups on the green grass, and they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties (vv. 39-40). Jesus fed the multitude with five loaves and two fish (v. 41). Not only was the crowd satisfied, but there was plenty left to fill up twelve baskets (vv. 42-43). And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men (v. 44).

Yet as straightforward as this feeding story is, the allusions in it are not. For example, Mark used the language related to the wilderness theme three times: ἔρημον τόπον in vv. 31 and 32, the word ἔρημος in v. 35. This remarkable repetition of the wilderness language is followed by the language of the shepherd: πρόβατα ("sheep") and

ποιμήν (“shepherd”) in v. 34, and τῷ χλωρῷ χόρτῳ (“green grass”) in v. 39. What does the present text try to convey about Jesus and his identity since all these allusions seem to relate to the OT? As audience/readers we know that Jesus is “the Son of God” from the very beginning (1:1, 11).¹ Will this passage reveal another aspect of Jesus so that we may understand him better? It is with these allusions (the wilderness in vv. 31, 32, and 35; the shepherd in v. 34; the green grass in v. 39; and the orderly groupings in v. 40) that the present study is concerned. Surely Mark did not use these allusions randomly; they are part of his overall narrative and theological strategy. Otto A. Piper argues that Mark has modeled his gospel after the Exodus event.² Indeed, most of the allusions in this narrative appear to relate to that Exodus event in the wilderness of the Sinai desert, where the people of Israel, led by Moses, experienced the miraculous feeding of manna from Yhwh (Exodus 18). And it was there in the wilderness that the Mosaic covenant was established between Yhwh and the Israelites (Exodus 19–24). Since these allusions were not put there by chance, it is important to see why Mark used them from both literary and theological perspectives.

Although there have been a number of important studies in the recent past concerning this Markan feeding narrative, there has not been a thorough and comprehensive literary analysis on the response of the implied audience to Mark’s uses

¹ Opinions are divided among scholars regarding the authenticity of the phrase υἱοῦ θεοῦ (“the Son of God”) in Mark 1:1, which is omitted by **ℵ*** **Θ** 28, but is attested by **ℵ**¹ **B** **D** **L** **W** 2427 and other later MSS. C. Clifton Black (“Mark as Historian of God’s Kingdom,” *CBQ* 71 [2009] 65 n. 3) laments that “adjudicating the text-critical problem in Mark 1:1, the jury is out. When it will return with a generally acceptable verdict is anyone’s guess.” Although the consensus is wanting, υἱοῦ θεοῦ is consistent with Mark’s own conviction about Jesus through the gospel (cf. 1:11; 3:11; 5:7; 9:7; 14:61; 15:39).

² Otto A. Piper, “Unchanging Promise: Exodus in the New Testament,” *Int* 11 (1957) 17.

of the OT allusions in 6:30-44.³ The studies employing literary-critical methods have dealt with the Gospel of Mark as a whole or with some feature which ranges across certain sections of the narrative, such as the techniques of echo and foreshadowing.⁴ Yet it is necessary to study individual units such as the feeding of the five thousand and see how they fit in the overall design of Mark's gospel. At the same time, it is also important to investigate the OT influences on Markan language, structure, and narrative techniques. This study will examine the feeding of five thousand as an integral part of the whole Markan narrative. It will analyze the rhetorical effect of the first Markan feeding narrative on its hearers or readers, i.e., how the implied audience is expected to respond to Mark's use of the OT images that portray Jesus as the shepherd who teaches and feeds his flock in the wilderness.

By way of introduction, this chapter will first provide a survey of recent scholarly discussion of various themes of the Markan text. It will then briefly discuss the relationship between the text, the audience, and the author pertaining to the meaning of the text. The chapter will conclude with the purpose and method of this study.

³ These studies tend to treat Mark 6:30-44 as a part of a larger three-part cycle that begins in chap. 4 and ends in chap. 8; see e.g., Paul J. Achtemeier, "The Origin and Function of the Pre-Markan Miracle Catenae," *JBL* 91 (1972) 198-221; William B. Waterford, *The Difference between Hearing and Reading about Jesus: Aural versus Literal Meanings of Biblical Texts (Mark 6:30-8:27a)* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 2007). Even those studies that focused on this feeding narrative itself tend to lump this feeding story with the feeding of four thousand; see, e.g., Jouette M. Bassler, "The Parables of the Loaves," *JR* 66 (1986) 157-72; and Robert M. Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes: The Function of the Feeding Stories in the Gospel of Mark* (SBLDS 54; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1978).

⁴ See, e.g., Mary Ann Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel: Mark's Work in Literary-Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996); David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (2nd ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999); and Robert M. Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand: Reader-Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991); Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "Echoes and Foreshadowings in Mark 4-8 Reading and Rereading," *JBL* 112 (1993) 211-30; Norman R. Petersen, "The Composition of Mark 4:1-8:26," *HTR* 73 (1980) 185-217.

I. Survey of Literature

Since there are no major studies treating the first Markan feeding narrative alone regarding its OT allusions with audience response from a literary-critical perspective, this section will briefly survey: (1) those studies that deal with general Exodus/wilderness themes proposing a methodical OT influence on Mark 6:30-44 literarily and theologically; (2) the studies that focus on the Markan feeding narratives using literary critical methods and discuss the reader response as their main focus; and (3) commentaries that have good and extensive discussions on this feeding narrative with regards to its OT allusions.

A. Studies That Focus on the Wilderness Theme

Otto A. Piper suggests that the Exodus event, from deliverance to conquest, is a continuous and important theme progressing from the OT books of Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Hosea to the NT books.⁵ He argues that the conspicuous place of the wilderness in Mark (1:4, 12, 13, 35, and 45) is explained by Mark's use of the Exodus event as the model for his gospel.⁶ For him, "the wilderness is not only a place of loneliness away from the busy life of the city and the pressure of work, it symbolizes also the interval between the premessianic age and the consummation, between deliverance and final bliss."⁷ He suggests that the bewildering criss-crossing of Galilee and Jesus'

⁵ Piper, "Unchanging Promise," 3-5.

⁶ Ibid., 17.

⁷ Ibid.

journeys into Phoenicia and towards Caesarea Philippi in Mark 7–8 echo Israel's wanderings in the desert.⁸

Piper also points out the important parallel between Jesus and Moses that Mark draws: Jesus is the second Moses, not primarily as a Lawgiver, “but as the leader of his people to the promised goal.”⁹ He argues that Jesus’ statement that he had come to give his life as ransom for many in Mark 10:45 resembles Moses’ offer to die for the sins of his people in Exod 32:32; and “the words of the Institution were chosen for their resemblance with Exod 24:8 and were meant to hint at the significance which the Last Supper had as the sealing of the new covenant.”¹⁰ However, Piper realizes that not everything in Mark’s gospel can be explained on the basis of Exodus. Instead, it provides the typological framework within which the material was arranged.¹¹

In his study of the OT wilderness tradition in the NT, Ulrich Mauser’s chief concern is “to trace some of the characteristics of Mark’s Gospel, using the theme of the wilderness as a guide.”¹² His main objective of study is Mark’s Prologue, 1:1-13. Mauser has shown that the wilderness theme is a common thread in the first half of the gospel starting from 1:14 where Jesus leaves the desert, because the theme recurs in 1:35,

⁸ Piper (ibid., 18) believes that “by relating the wilderness to the kerygma the movement started by Jesus characterized itself as a new Exodus. This view in turn would explain why the Primitive Church interpreted its own existence as that of God’s people in the desert.”

⁹ Ibid., 18.

¹⁰ Ibid., 19.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ulrich Mauser, *Christ in the Wilderness: The Wilderness Theme in the Second Gospel and its Basis in the Biblical Tradition* (SBT 39; London: SCM Press, 1963) 13.

45, and later in 6:31-32, 35 Jesus is again in an ἔρημον τόπον (a “desert place;” cf. 8:4).¹³

Mauser recognizes that there are some formal characteristics in common between Mark 1:35, 45 and 6:31-33: “the verses (*a*) are always preceded by an account of preaching and the performance of a mighty deed, (*b*) represent a retreat from the crowds, and (*c*) are followed by an account of strong attraction to Jesus on the part of the people.”¹⁴

Mauser is right in pointing out that the wilderness tradition is significant in Mark’s gospel because its opening verses are dominated by this theme. The feeding of five thousand narrative shows a strong parallel to the story of the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites not only by its desert locale with a miraculous feeding but also by the arrangement of the people in groups of hundreds and fifties (Mark 6:40; cf. Exod 18:21; 1QS 2.21-22; CD 13.1; 1QM 4.1-5). Mauser maintains that the shepherd image of 6:34 belongs to the wilderness tradition of Num 27:17.¹⁵ He believes that the Markan wilderness theme is primarily concerned about the hope at the end time when Jesus becomes the shepherd who will lead a new exodus of God’s people.¹⁶ Although Mauser properly connects the Markan wilderness theme with the Exodus, his main interest is Christ in the wilderness rather than Jesus as the shepherd.

Joel Marcus agrees with Mauser that the wilderness theme is important to Mark, but argues specifically that what is essential for Mark is the Deutero-Isaiah form of the

¹³ Ibid., 104-5.

¹⁴ Ibid., 105.

¹⁵ Ibid., 135.

¹⁶ Ibid., 51.

wilderness theme “with its hope of eschatological victory in the wilderness.”¹⁷ For Marcus, “the apocalyptic nature of Mark’s wilderness hope and his retention of the Deutero-Isaian context have important consequences for the interpretation of ‘the way of the Lord’ in 1:3.”¹⁸ However, Marcus disagrees with the common ethical interpretation of “the way of the Lord” to mean the way in which the Lord wants his people to walk. Instead, Marcus argues that “the way of the Lord” in 1:3, which has been placed strategically at the beginning of the gospel, is to be understood as Yhwh’s own march through the wilderness—his triumphant processional march according to Isaiah.¹⁹ And this understanding is supported by the usage of ὁδός in “the way” section (8:22–10:52) where Mark tells his audience that Jesus and his disciples were *on the way* to Jerusalem. Marcus recognizes that 1:2-3 is an important passage not only for the discussion of Mark’s use of the OT but also for the discussion of his Christology. However, despite the fact that 6:34 depicts Jesus as the shepherd teaching and feeding his people in the wilderness, Marcus only treats it in passing.²⁰

Rikki E. Watts believes that the New Exodus theme of Isaiah (particularly Deutero-Isaiah) is the hermeneutical key not only to the structure of the Gospel of Mark but to Markan Christology and soteriology as well. Watts contends that, in keeping with ancient literary practice, Mark’s “sole explicit editorial citation” of the OT in the

¹⁷ Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992) 26.

¹⁸ Ibid., 29.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 5.

introductory sentence (1:1-3) indicates the main concerns for his prologue and sets up the conceptual framework for his gospel.²¹ Watts argues that three resulting sections in the Gospel of Mark correspond to the three “stages” of “Isaiah’s New Exodus schema”: (1) “Jesus’ ministry in Galilee and Beyond” (1:16–8:21/26)—Yahweh delivers Israel from “the power of the nations and their idols”; (2) the “Way” (8:22/27–10:45/52)—Yahweh leads the people along the “Way of the Lord”; and (3) “Jerusalem” (10:46/11:1–16:8)—Yahweh and the people arrive in Jerusalem in triumph.²²

For Watts, Jesus’ Galilean ministry in the Markan narrative represents the deliverance of God’s people from bondage to the demonic (1:16–8:21/26). Here, Jesus is the Warrior-Shepherd who heals the blind, deaf, and lame, and provides food for the multitude in the desert as he inaugurates the New Exodus.²³ Then, in the “way” section of the gospel (8:22–10:52), Jesus leads his “blind and deaf” disciples toward Jerusalem as he teaches them God’s way of thinking which is totally different from their own. God’s plan involves the suffering and death of his servant (8:31; cf. Isaiah 53).²⁴ Finally, just as the return from the exile did not live up to the expectations of the people, the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem as the Warrior-Shepherd of Deutero-Isaiah also fails to become the glorious movement for the expected enthronement of Jesus (the king). Instead of being welcomed by the religious authorities, Jesus was rejected and executed

²¹ Rikki E. Watts, *Isaiah’s New Exodus in Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000) 90; cf. 370.

²² *Ibid.*, 135; cf. 371.

²³ *Ibid.*, 137-82.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 221-94.

in Jerusalem. But his death is necessary, just as it was necessary for the servant of Isaiah 53 who suffered for others.²⁵

Watts suggests that the Markan feeding accounts are to be read “in the light of Yahweh’s provision for his people in the INE [Isaianic New Exodus]” because there is little connection between the feeding in Exodus 13–17 and those in the first half of Mark.²⁶ He argues that “the feeding of the 5000 should be seen in terms of Yahweh’s NE [New Exodus] provision for his people.”²⁷ While Watts is right to point out the feeding story is a part of the New Exodus, his denial of the connection between the feeding stories of Exodus and Mark detracts from his argument because the New Exodus has its origin in the old Exodus event and is symbolically connected to the old.

B. Studies Using Literary Methods

Robert M. Fowler’s dissertation is a study of the Markan feeding narratives (6:30-44 and 8:1-10) that combines both redaction criticism and literary criticism. The first stage of his study consists of a redaction-critical study of Mark’s two feeding narratives, in which Fowler challenges the prevailing view that the two feeding stories are a doublet in the sense of traditional variants. He argues that “Mark 8:1-10 may be the traditional story (with some Markan redaction), while 6:30-44 may be a story created by Mark using the other story as a model.”²⁸ For the most part, he attempts to show that the first feeding

²⁵ Ibid., 295-368.

²⁶ Ibid., 179.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes*, 36.

miracle is a Markan composition while the second feeding preserves a pre-Markan tradition.

In the second stage of his study, Fowler offers a literary-critical analysis of the feeding stories, namely, in the context of larger doublets in Mark 4–8 (6:30-44 and 8:1-10; 4:35-41 and 6:45-52; 7:31-37 and 8:22-26), giving special attention to the function of irony and doublets. He claims that these doublets are devices of Markan composition (the intention of the author) and communication (the effect on the reader) and that the doublet in Mark 6:30-44 and Mark 8:1-10 was designed by Mark for the sake of deliberate irony. Fowler asserts that the disciples' question in 8:4 is "the crucial verse" for interpreting the two feeding stories, because it is an ironical indication of their obtuseness.²⁹ Putting aside his assessment of irony in the feeding stories, Fowler's argument that the composition of 6:30-44 is based on 8:1-10 contradicts the logic he uses to argue against the eucharistic interpretation of the feeding stories that it "tends to violate the author's text by reading it out of order."³⁰

Jouette M. Bassler tries to demonstrate the parabolic feature of the feeding narratives in Mark 6–8 using the reader-response theory.³¹ Her presentation offers an appropriate framework to investigate the meaning of the feeding sections in Mark 6–8 for

²⁹ Ibid., 93.

³⁰ Ibid., 99; Fowler (ibid., 140) argues that "it can scarcely be overemphasized that the Feeding of the Five Thousand and the Feeding of the Four Thousand precede and prepare for the Last Supper narrative in Mark. To read casually the former stories in the light of the later is simply to overrun the gospel. Fidelity to the text demands that we work the text the author has given us and, barring accidental displacements or authorial instruction to disregard the present order of the text, that we read it in the order it is presented to us."

³¹ Bassler, "The Parables of the Loaves," 157.

the implied reader. Like the parables, she contends that, “the multiplication of the loaves creates a crisis of understanding that separates those privileged with insights from those who are not. . . . whereas the parables of chapter 4 distinguished (albeit tenuously) the disciples from ‘those outsiders,’ the puzzlement over the loaves indicates that the disciples are now also incomprehending outsiders.”³²

She argues that the feeding miracles “are replete with entangling ‘gaps’” and one of those “entangling gaps” is the bewildering statement by the narrator in 6:52: “for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened” (*NRSV*) because it is out of place in the sea-walking setting and not “the explanation expected by the reader.”³³ For the implied reader, the meaning of this confusing comment comes into being only when he or she identifies with the Markan disciples because the same misunderstanding and the same confusion are experienced by the reader.³⁴

Bassler suggests that “the significance of the loaves” remains an enigma until Mark 14 when the Lord’s Supper is instituted and it is there that “the final piece of the puzzle falls into place.”³⁵ Here Bassler proposes a variant of the eucharistic interpretation of the Markan feeding miracles.³⁶ But she is quick to point out that her

³² Ibid., 158.

³³ Ibid., 163.

³⁴ Ibid., 165

³⁵ Ibid., 168.

³⁶ For a view in favor of such an interpretation, see Alan Richardson, “The Feeding of the Five Thousand: Mark 6:34-44,” *Int* 9 (1955) 144-49 and Bas M. F. van Iersel, “Die wunderbare Speisung und das Abendmahl in der Synoptischen Tradition (Mk vi 35-44 par., viii 1-20 par.)” *NovT* 7 (1964) 167-94. For a view against the eucharistic interpretation of this feeding narrative, see George Henry Boobyer, “The Eucharistic Interpretation of the Miracles of the Loaves in St. Mark’s Gospel,” *JTS* 3 (1952) 161-71.

“eucharistic interpretation” is different from the usual one because “it honors the time flow of the reading process and the direction of the narrative,”³⁷ for hers is to suggest that “one follows the *implied* reader instead of the *informed* reader through the text.”³⁸

C. Commentaries

The commentaries, especially the newer ones, generally have been able to treat and discuss Mark’s first feeding narrative in terms of its OT allusions and its relationship with the OT and the Qumran community fairly well. The nature of the analysis of 6:30-44 in the older commentaries, however, is heavily oriented toward the text’s tradition and history, allowing for rather little explication of 6:30-44 as a literary piece and its OT allusions. For example, when commenting on ὥς πρόβατα μὴ ἔχοντα ποιμένα (“like sheep without a shepherd”) in 6:34, Vincent Taylor merely suggests that these words have a strong resemblance to Num 27:17 and other OT books in the LXX but makes little of the Exodus connection.³⁹ There are, however, works which look beyond the emphasis on the text’s philology and tradition. William L. Lane, for instance, notices the significance of the expression ἔρημον τόπον (“wilderness-place,” his rendition) that Mark repeats in 6:31-32 and its typological relationship with the Exodus event. Lane contends that Mark proclaims in 6:34 that Jesus is appointed by God to lead “the people in their exodus into the wilderness.”⁴⁰ More recent commentaries have been less preoccupied

³⁷ Bassler, “The Parables of the Loaves,” 168.

³⁸ Ibid., 172.

³⁹ Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1955) 320.

⁴⁰ William L. Lane, *The Gospel according to Mark* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 225-26.

with the text's prehistory and have given greater scope to literary and theological issues in the light of its OT allusions. For example, Morna D. Hooker argues "the important role of Old Testament narrative and symbolism in this story" (Exodus 16 and Numbers 11) and the parallel between Mark's feeding account and that of Elisha in 2 Kgs 4:42-44.⁴¹ She observes that the shepherd image in 6:34 is used in the OT of leaderless Israel (Num 27:17; 1 Kgs 22:17; Ezek 34:5) and both Moses and David were shepherds before becoming leaders of the nation of Israel. She points out that various passages speak of the future Davidic leader as the shepherd of his people (Jer 23:1-6; Ezek 34:22-24) and that Jesus is this kind of shepherd and leader/king for Mark.⁴² Commenting on 6:31-34, M. Eugene Boring concurs with others that the wilderness setting in Mark connects to that of the Moses story and "'like sheep without a shepherd' is not an *ad hoc* casual comment of the Markan Jesus as narrator, but echoes the phrase found explicitly in Num 27:17 (in the context of God appointing a new leader for Israel as Moses' successor) and later in Israel's history when human kingship had failed to represent God's own rule over Israel (1 Kgs 22:17//2 Chron 18:16; Jdt 11:19)."⁴³ Boring asserts that throughout this feeding narrative "Mark focuses on the affirmation that Jesus is the eschatological shepherd who teaches with authority," but he unnecessarily suggests that the teaching of

⁴¹ Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (BNTC II; London: A. & C. Black, 1991) 164; see also John Paul Heil, *The Gospel of Mark as Model for Action: A Reader-Response Commentary* (New York: Paulist, 1992) 141-46; Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 27; New York: Doubleday, 2000) 404-21; John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark* (SacPag 2; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2002) 203-11; Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002) 128-33; Robert H. Stein, *Mark* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008) 309-19.

⁴² Hooker, *St. Mark*, 165.

⁴³ M. Eugene Boring, *Mark: A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006) 182-83.

Jesus “takes priority over working miracles.”⁴⁴ While Boring is correct about Jesus’ eschatological nature, his suggestion that Jesus’ teaching has priority over his miracles is unconvincing. As the shepherd, Jesus feeds his flock by providing spiritual nourishment and material food; both aspects are important to his ministry.

The commentaries have tended, however, to give only minimal attention to possible lines of unifying thought in Mark 6:30-44. In addition, the commentary format dictates a brief and dense analysis of the text, thus making it difficult to pursue in depth some of the issues to be taken up in the present study (e.g., response of the implied audience). Nevertheless, these commentaries will provide an important foundation and a starting point for the present study.⁴⁵

In conclusion, two general points may be made about the literature on or relevant to Mark 6:30-44: (1) the previous works in different areas of Markan and NT studies have provided valuable insights and helpful perspectives for the present study in spite of their limitations. They have called our attention to important issues and questions raised by the first Markan feeding narrative and have set the stage for further research. (2) Since there are no major literary-critical studies treating Mark’s first feeding narrative regarding its OT allusions, it is clear that there is room in scholarship for a new study on Mark 6:30-44 that incorporates findings of previous research, balances methodological

⁴⁴ Ibid., 183.

⁴⁵ For several different literary approaches toward the Gospel of Mark, see Bas M. F. van Iersel, *Mark: A Reader-Response Commentary* (trans. W. H. Bisscherooux; JSNTSup 164; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998); Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark’s Story of Jesus* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2008); Whitney T. Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel: First-Century Performance of Mark* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2003).

approaches to the text, and interprets this feeding narrative on its own and as a coherent literary unit.

II. The Author, the Audience, and the Text

The theoretical framework for literary criticism is based on theories of human communication.⁴⁶ The simplest yet fundamental human communication model is a linear one that consists of three basic parts: the sender/the author, the message/the text, and the receiver/the audience. If any one of these three parts is missing, communication would be broken if not impossible. Thus all three components are important and contribute to the process and understanding of any given communication act. Since “all theories of literature . . . understand the text as a form of communication through which a message is passed from the author to the reader,”⁴⁷ the best approach toward the interpretation of Mark’s first feeding narrative (and the gospel as a whole) would be a holistic one that includes all three communication components. In this section, I will briefly discuss these three parts in turn, the relationship between them, and the implications for the present study.

A. The Author

1. The Real Author

Traditionally, the authorship of the Gospel of Mark is attributed to Mark although the author did not identify himself in the gospel. According to the testimony of Papias, a second-century church leader, Mark was “an interpreter” of the apostle Peter and “wrote

⁴⁶ Mark Allan Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) 8.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

down carefully” the traditions about Jesus but “not in the right order.”⁴⁸ It is believed that Mark worked on his gospel in Rome approximately between the mid to late 60s C.E., about thirty years after the death of Jesus and shortly after the execution of Peter when Christians were severely persecuted by Nero.⁴⁹

Scholars who reject this attribution argue that it is possible that the gospel was originally anonymous. It is most likely written by an unknown Christian named Mark, a common name in the Roman world,⁵⁰ or by a Christian teacher whose name was Mark.⁵¹ For these scholars, the reliability of the Papias tradition is questioned.⁵² The reason is obvious. The gospel itself makes no suggestion or connection between the anonymous author and the apostle Peter as recorded by Eusebius. They believe that the Gospel of Mark was written somewhere between 66 to 70 C.E.—during or a few years after the Jewish War against Roman dominance that resulted in the catastrophic defeat of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem.

⁴⁸ Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* (trans. G. A. Williamson; New York: Dorset, 1965) 3.39.11-17. This Mark is usually identified as John Mark in Acts. He is first mentioned in Acts 12:12 in connection with his mother Mary, who had a house in Jerusalem where believers gathered and prayed for Peter’s release from jail. Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabas when they returned to Antioch from Jerusalem after their mission was completed there (Acts 12:25). He later appears as a ὑπηρέτης (“assistant”) to Paul and Barnabas and helped them on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:5).

⁴⁹ John R. Donahue, “Windows and Mirrors: The Setting of Mark’s Gospel,” *CBQ* 57 (1995) 1-26.

⁵⁰ Marcus, *Mark* 1–8, 17-18.

⁵¹ Boring, *Mark*, 20-21.

⁵² Marcus, *Mark* 1–8, 21-24.

2. The Implied Author

The implied author of Mark is not the real author whom we will never know but the author who is detectable from the Markan text.⁵³ This author is “implied” because he has a textual role and is “reconstructed by the reader from the narrative.”⁵⁴ The idea of the implied author is not an attempt to second guess what the real author might have been like, “but to elucidate the perspective from which the narrative must be interpreted.”⁵⁵ A writer is to remain neutral and impartial when writing and avoids making any value judgments. The “personality” of this author, however, such as belief, value, and worldview, comes through in the narrative like his or her “second self” as the implied author.⁵⁶ “The implied author controls the communication and represents the strategy, values, concerns and objectives of the text.”⁵⁷ Although literary critics make a distinction between the implied author and the narrator, there is no distinction between these two

⁵³ For example, this author spoke Greek and perhaps Aramaic. He was not very familiar with Palestinian geography. He was not an eyewitness of Jesus’ ministry and based his gospel on oral (and written) traditions about Jesus.

⁵⁴ Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978) 148.

⁵⁵ Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* 5.

⁵⁶ Wayne C. Booth (*The Rhetoric of Fiction* [2nd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983] 70-71) writes: “As he writes, he [the real author] creates not simply an ideal, impersonal ‘man in general’ but an implied version of ‘himself’ that is different from the implied authors we meet in other men’s works. . . . Whether we call this implied author an ‘official scribe,’ or adopt the term revived by Kathleen Tillotson—the author’s ‘second self’—it is clear that the picture the reader gets of this presence is one of the author’s most important effects. However impersonal he may try to be, his reader will inevitably construct a picture of the official scribe who writes in this manner—and of course that official scribe will never be neutral toward all values.”

⁵⁷ Heil, *The Gospel of Mark as Model for Action*, 1.

roles in the Gospel of Mark in terms of “the point of view” because the implied author’s point of view is identical with that of the third-person omniscient narrator.⁵⁸

3. The Intention of the Author

The tendency in literary criticism for both the secularist and the biblicist is to shy away from the author or the intention of the author, but for different reasons. The secularists disregard the author because they claim that the author had died.⁵⁹ The biblicists turn away from the author because of the failure of the speculative works of the historical methods. It is argued that “the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art.”⁶⁰ Given the nature of the Markan narrative (and the gospel narratives in general), it may be safe to assume generally that the intention of the gospel writers is to tell the story of Jesus to the extent of persuading the audience/readers to profess their faith in the crucified Christ and live a godly life.⁶¹ Specifically, as a storyteller, Mark used certain techniques to make his story intriguing and interesting to his audience. For example, why does Mark portray Jesus as a shepherd and not some other type of profession? What is Mark’s

⁵⁸ Norman R. Petersen, “‘Point of View’ in Mark’s Narrative,” *Semeia* 12 (1978) 105.

⁵⁹ Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” in *Image, Music, Text* (trans. Stephen Heath; New York: Hill & Wang, 1977) 142-48.

⁶⁰ W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, “The Intentional Fallacy,” in *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (ed. W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley; Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1954) 3.

⁶¹ It seems that the main difference between the biblical narratives (specially the gospel narratives) and the secular fictions is that the intent or general purpose of the gospel writers can be safely assumed, e.g., Mark told his audience from the very beginning that his story is about the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Although there are different perspectives or themes within the Gospel of Mark, such as the “messianic secret,” “kingdom of God,” and “apology for the cross,” these aspects do not conflict with Mark’s overall evangelistic objective, i.e., his intention.

intension by alluding repeatedly to the wilderness theme in his first feeding narrative?

Where does he want to lead his audience and readers in terms of association and response to these imageries in his writing? Since the author is the initiator of any given communication act, an understanding of the author's intent would be crucial for our interpretation of the text. E. D. Hirsch contends that "all valid interpretation of every sort is founded on the re-cognition of what an author meant."⁶² Although it is not intended to argue for an intentionalistic view in this study, the authorial intention is viewed as an intrinsic part of the interpretation process. Elucidating the purposed intention of Mark will certainly help us to know what kind of response he tries to elicit from his audience. Therefore, the present study will consider Mark's intention as well as the audience's activity in order to gain a fuller understanding of his first feeding narrative.

B. The Audience/Reader

1. The Real Audience—A Markan Community?

It is generally agreed that Mark has written his gospel for a persecuted Christian community of which he was also a member.⁶³ For those who favor traditional Markan authorship, this community resides in Rome.⁶⁴ Scholars who argue for an anonymous authorship tend to locate this community somewhere in the Roman province of Syria.⁶⁵

⁶² E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967) 126.

⁶³ Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 25-33. For an opposing view, see Richard Bauckham, "For Whom Were Gospels Written?" in *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (ed. Richard Bauckham; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 9-48.

⁶⁴ See, e.g., Taylor, *St. Mark*, 32; Lane, *Mark*, 24-25; Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26* (WBC 34A; Dallas: Word, 1989) xxix-xxxi.

⁶⁵ See, e.g., Howard C. Kee, *Community of the New Age: Studies in Mark's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977) 100-105; Joel Marcus, "The Jewish War and the *Sitz im Leben* of Mark," *JBL* 111

No matter where this community was, the persecution described in Mark's gospel was real and present, and it came from both Jewish and Roman authorities. Mark wrote his gospel, in part, to give people courage to live in faith despite persecution and opposition (his intention?).⁶⁶

2. The Implied Audience or the Implied Reader?

The implied audience is not a real audience but the audience that may be inferred from the Markan text.⁶⁷ It is "a theoretical construct that represents the responses the implied author intends or assumes on the part of his audience."⁶⁸ This is an imaginary audience implied by the narrative in an effort to guide the real audience to react with proper responses.⁶⁹ The implied audience in the present study is used interchangeably with the term "implied reader" which is commonly used by literary critics. The reasons for this study to use "the implied audience" are that (1) the Gospel of Mark was intended to be read aloud because "silent reading was relatively rare in the first century. . . . Literary documents, even when read privately, were vocalized;"⁷⁰ (2) the literacy rate in

(1992) 441-62. For an argument for a Galilean locale of origin, see Werner H. Kelber, *The Kingdom in Mark: a New Place and a New Time* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974).

⁶⁶ Ernest Best, *Mark: The Gospel as Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 51.

⁶⁷ From the Markan narratives, we know that this was a Christian, Greek-speaking audience that probably did not know Aramaic because Mark explained the Aramaic expressions to them (3:17; 5:41; 7:11, 34; 15:22, 34). This Christian audience was also familiar with the gospel terminology such as "Son of God," Jesus Christ, "Son of David," etc.

⁶⁸ Heil, *The Gospel of Mark as Model for Action*, 2.

⁶⁹ For the differences of the meaning of the implied reader among W. C. Booth, S. Chatman, and Wolfgang Iser, see Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand*, 34.

⁷⁰ Whitney T. Shiner, *Follow Me! Disciples in Markan Rhetoric* (SBLDS 145; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995) 4-5.

antiquity was fairly low.⁷¹ The audience/the reader has been labeled by different critics as the implied reader, the narratee, the hypothetical reader, the optimal reader, the intended reader, the composite reader, the encoded reader, to name a few.⁷² But no matter what label we give to this reader or audience, it is a textual role, not a “flesh-and-bones” one.⁷³ During the hearing or the reading process, however, the real and “flesh-and-bones” audience or reader will consciously or unconsciously take on the role of “the implied reader” in the text. “The implied reader is the reader we must be willing to become, at least temporarily, in order to experience the narrative in the fullest measure.”⁷⁴

⁷¹ According to Richard A. Horsley (*Jesus in Context: Power, People, and Performance* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008] 89), “virtually no one in antiquity could read or write, except for a few aristocrats and scribes. . . . In the Roman Empire, the rate was probably under 10 percent.” See also Joanna Dewey, “The Survival of Mark’s Gospel: A Good Story?” *JBL* 123 (2004) 495-507, esp. 497-500. However, there is no consensus on this issue among scholars. For example, Alan Millard (*Reading and Writing in the Time of Jesus* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000] 185-229, esp. 210-29) contends that archaeological discoveries show that writing and reading were widely practiced in the Palestine of Jesus’ day.

⁷² Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand*, 26. Fowler (ibid., 36) enumerates another group of readers (the informed reader, the superreader, the competent reader, the educated reader, and so on) which he labels as “the ideal reader.” He argues that the “ideal reader adds a whole new dimension to implied reader, . . . for it reveals the critical impulse not just to apprehend the reader implied in one text but also to apprehend the reader implied in many texts, so as to encompass and supersede them all.” On the other hand, Peter J. Rabinowitz (“Truth in Fiction: A Reexamination of Audiences,” *Critical Inquiry* 4 [1977] 121-41) favors four different types of audiences: the actual audience, the authorial audience, the narrative audience, and the ideal narrative audience.

⁷³ For Chatman (*Story and Discourse*, 149-50), the implied reader is “not the flesh-and-bones you or I sitting in our living rooms reading the book, but the audience presupposed by the narrative itself. Like the implied author, the implied reader is always present.”

⁷⁴ Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand*, 33.

C. The Text

1. The Integrity of the Text

According to Rudolf Bultmann's classification, Mark's first feeding narrative is a "nature miracle" and "Mark's editorial activity has affected the beginning of the story."⁷⁵ The difficulty for the commentators is to discern and decide where the Markan editorial activity began and what to do with 6:30. There are wide disagreements among the commentators as how to divide Mark 6:30-44. Taylor believes that 6:30-34 is "an independent narrative introducing that narrative," and "the narrative is constructed by Mark as a prelude to the account of the breaking of bread in the wilderness."⁷⁶ van Iersel contends that 6:30-34 are simply functional: "This is one of the pieces that connect two episodes rather than forming episodes themselves."⁷⁷ Some commentators treat 6:30 as a transitional verse and leave it to the previous literary unit. For them, the introduction of this miracle story is 6:32-34.⁷⁸ Hooker alone starts the feeding of five thousand from 6:32 and ends at 6:45.⁷⁹ Stein lists at least six editorial works done by the hand of Mark in 6:30-35; he finds little evidence of Markan redaction in 6:36-44.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (trans. John Marsh; New York: Harper & Row, 1963) 217.

⁷⁶ Taylor, *St. Mark*, 318; 317-26.

⁷⁷ van Iersel, *Mark*, 224; 224-30.

⁷⁸ See, e.g., Boring, *Mark*, 179-87; Adela Y. Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007) 316-23; James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001) 189-96; and R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 260-68. For a summary of this issue in other commentaries, see Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 336.

⁷⁹ Hooker, *St. Mark*, 165-68.

⁸⁰ Stein, *Mark*, 309-10.

Unlike historical criticism which focuses on the pre-Markan history (the past), literary criticism emphasizes the final form of the Markan text (the present). In consonance with current Markan scholarship, the narrative unity of the Gospel of Mark is assumed and individual units are interpreted in terms of their relationship to the gospel as a whole.⁸¹ Since I assume that Mark's gospel presents itself as a united and cohesive narrative, this study will examine Mark as an independent gospel on its own merits. It will not refer and compare Mark with other synoptic gospels because "we cannot legitimately use the other Gospels to 'fill out' or to 'fill in'—as a way to explain or elaborate Mark's story."⁸² To treat and view the Markan text as the final form also means that the pre-Markan redaction history, such as pre-Markan forms and sources, is not my main concern. This emphasis on the final form of Mark, of course, does not mean that the pre-history of the Markan text is unimportant or irrelevant to the present study. On the contrary, any insight or information that can be gathered from the stages of pre-Markan tradition will shed light on the understanding of its final form and thus is valuable for the present study of the feeding narrative of 6:30-44.

2. The Meaning of the Text

The main goal of this study is to discern the meaning of Mark's first feeding narrative. Does a text (a biblical text here) have multiple and infinite meaning and does that meaning solely reside in and depend on its audience/reader? What is the relationship between the text and its audience/reader? Does the author have any say in terms of his or

⁸¹ Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?* 7.

⁸² Rhoads et al. *Mark as Story*, 5.

her intention of writing the text? Robert M. Fowler laments that “a recurring debate among reader-oriented critics concerns the relationship between the text and the reader.”⁸³

As mentioned above, the human communication process includes three distinguished components: the sender (the author), the message (the text), and the receiver who accepts and decodes the message (the audience/the reader listens/reads the text). In order to understand the message properly, all three components (and others, such as the context) must be taken into consideration because they all contribute to the understanding of the message/text. To emphasize one part and neglect the others would violate this basic principle of communication and will not help us to get the full picture of the text. Although the text does “speak” to the audience/reader during the hearing/reading process on an individual level, it is also important to recognize the historical and cultural context from which a text, especially a biblical text, was written by its author. There is no doubt that the audience and readers with different backgrounds will bring their personal insights to the text and enrich the hearing/reading experience. But an overemphasis on the activity of the audience/reader as he or she interacts with a text individually in an effort to create new meanings without regards to its historical and cultural settings would invite unnecessarily radical relativism.⁸⁴ To say that a text can

⁸³ Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand*, 34.

⁸⁴ Commenting on reader-oriented theories of Stanley Fish and Wolfgang Iser, Stephen D. Moore (*Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989] 121) points out that for these critics, “criticism is an ineluctably creative activity. Prior to the interpretive act, there is nothing definitive in the text to be discovered.”

mean many different things to each individual is essentially to say that it means nothing at all and ultimately undermines the understanding and interpretation of the text.⁸⁵

III. Purpose and Methods

The study will attempt to demonstrate how the implied audience is expected to respond to Mark's use of the OT images in 6:30-44 that portray Jesus as the eschatological shepherd who teaches and feeds his flock in the wilderness. This demonstration will be based not only on the audience's presupposed knowledge of these images but also on what the audience has heard of them in the previous narrative (1:3-4, 21-28).

Mark's first feeding narrative will be examined in two phases in this study. The first phase will be a textual and redactional analysis of the narrative. There are two reasons for this analysis: (1) it will help us to see what Mark did with the original material in terms of alterations or additions to achieve his theological and literary goals; (2) it will help us to understand Mark's intention and his distinctive communication patterns. After establishing the Greek text, a translation will be made into contemporary idiomatic English which will be the text for the second phase of the present study. That this study focuses on the final form of the Markan text naturally limits the contributions from those approaches which study tradition behind the text. However, the identification of pre-Markan tradition will provide valuable clues to our understanding of the finished text.

The second phase will be a literary critical study of Mark's first feeding narrative.

⁸⁵ Hirsch (*Validity in Interpretation*, 5) argues that "to banish the original author as the determiner of meaning was to reject the only compelling normative principle that could lend validity to an interpretation."

In this part of the study, I will interpret the first Markan feeding story as a literary work with narrative features like plot, character, setting, point of view, and the audience, and how it fits in the Gospel of Mark as a whole.⁸⁶ My purpose here is threefold: First, I will examine the literary genre of this unit in order to take a close look at the parallel of structure and language between this feeding narrative and that of 2 Kgs 4:42-44, which may be considered as a prototype to the Markan account. I will discuss the OT allusions from a narrative standpoint and its relationship with the rest of the Markan narrative.

Second, I will discuss how the implied audience is expected to respond to Mark's use of the OT allusions as intended by the author. As discussed earlier, the implied audience refers to the audience which is created by the implied author with the ability necessary to understand and decode the text as the narrative unfolds. It is assumed that Mark was familiar with his audience (or community) for whom he wrote because he "cannot write without making certain assumptions about his readers' beliefs, knowledge, and familiarity with conventions. His artistic choices are based upon these assumptions, conscious or unconscious, and to a certain extent, his artistic success will depend on their accuracy."⁸⁷ Of course, studying the implied audience in Mark's narrative will not tell us about the actual first audience or readers, but it may give us an inkling of the kind of attitudes, values, beliefs, and actions the author intended the audience/reader to be or

⁸⁶ To treat Mark as a literary work does not imply that it is fictional but rather that "the narrative world of the story is a literary creation of the author and has an autonomous integrity, quite apart from any resemblances to the real world of Jesus' or Mark's time." See esp. David Rhoads, "Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark," *JAAR* 50 (1982) 413. For pros and cons of narrative criticism as a critical method for biblical studies, see Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?* 85-98.

⁸⁷ Rabinowitz, "Truth in Fiction," 126.

become.⁸⁸ For example, “by staying with the story to the end, the reader is more faithful than the disciples or the women at the tomb. Thus, the implied author has made of the ideal reader a faithful disciple.”⁸⁹

Third, I will seek what kind of theological meaning Mark is trying to convey through his narrative text. I will study what effects the OT allusions in Mark’s first feeding narrative have on the audience. Mark’s departures from sources through his redactional work may provide crucial clues to us about his thinking and theology, but this insight from redaction criticism should not overshadow the clues already accessible in his final text. Thus, this study will seek a balanced approach which tries to combine “the best” of what redaction and literary criticism can offer in the course of searching for the meaning Mark wished to convey to his audience. This study anticipates that determining and analyzing the responses of the implied audience will explicate the theological meaning of the shepherd imagery and the author’s original intent, therefore illuminating how the OT themes of the wilderness and the shepherd were related to the rest of the Gospel of Mark from a narrative point of view.

⁸⁸ Rhoads, “Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark,” 423.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

Chapter Two

An Analysis of Mark's First Feeding Narrative (6:30-44)

I. Introduction

The purpose of the present chapter is to discern facets of the meaning of Mark 6:30-44 through a careful analysis of the text. To achieve this aim I will probe 6:30-44 by means of redaction-critical analysis.⁹⁰ Unlike form criticism that concentrates on analyzing individual units (forms) of tradition and how these units were transmitted in the early church before the gospels were written, “redaction criticism seeks to discern the theologies and intentions of the evangelists themselves by observing the manner in which they edited their sources and arranged the individual units of tradition.”⁹¹ In other words, redaction criticism places its emphasis on the fact that the gospel writers are real authors, not simply collectors of individual units of traditions. It looks beyond the traditions to discover the theological motives of the gospel writers. Thus, the Gospel of Mark is not merely a series of short scenes with a “this-after-that” chain of events. Rather it is written in a logical and calculated way by its author to make certain theological statements.

Since the story of the feeding of five thousand we now have is a finished text, what Mark has done with the tradition he received is very important. Therefore, I will

⁹⁰ Robert H. Stein (“The Proper Methodology for Ascertaining a Markan Redaction History,” *NovT* 13 [1971] 181-98) has enumerated twelve ways in which one could identify Markan redaction from pre-Markan tradition which will be helpful for the present study: (1) Seams; (2) Insertions; (3) Summaries; (4) Creation of Pericopae; (5) Modification of Material; (6) Selection of Material; (7) Omission of Material; (8) Arrangement of Material; (9) Introduction; (10) Conclusion; (11) Vocabulary; (12) Christological Titles.

⁹¹ Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* 2.

take a close look at the text and try to discern the redaction (or editing) of the traditional sources by Mark. Particularly, I am interested in what kind of theological viewpoints Mark is trying to convey by editing his sources, and what Christological significance is implied by the way in which Mark has reworked the tradition. In the following pages, I will first translate the Greek text into contemporary idiomatic English with textual notes for significant variants that might affect the translation. Then a detailed analysis of the text will be provided using standard redaction critical techniques. And finally, this chapter will conclude with a summary of important theological and Christological significance discovered through the analysis.

II. Translation

³⁰ The apostles gathered together with Jesus and reported to him all that they had done and taught.

³¹ He said to them, “Come by yourselves alone to a wilderness place and rest for a while.” For many people were coming and going and they did not even have a chance to eat.

³² So they went in a boat to a wilderness place alone by themselves.

³³ But many saw them going and recognized it, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them.⁹²

⁹² The reading *καὶ προῆλθον αὐτοὺς* (“and they arrived ahead of them”) is attested by **Ν** B (0187). 892. 2427 *pc* lat co, while the reading *καὶ συνῆλθον αὐτοῦ* (“and they came together”) is found in D (28. 700, 33 *pc*) b. Bruce M. Metzger (*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* [2nd ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994] 78) believes that “it is possible that *προῆλθον* was altered to either *προσῆλθον* or *συνῆλθον* by copyists who thought it unlikely that the crowd on the land would have outstripped the boat. . . . Thus, both external evidence and internal considerations converge in making it probable that the reading with *προῆλθον* is the original.”

³⁴As he got out of the boat, he saw a large crowd and had compassion on them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began to teach them many things.

³⁵When it was already late, his disciples came and said to him, “This is a wilderness place and it is already late.

³⁶Send them away so that they can go to the surrounding farms and villages and buy for themselves something to eat.”

³⁷He answered and said to them, “Give them something to eat yourselves!” They said to him, “Are we to go and buy two hundred *denarii* worth of bread and give it to them to eat?”

³⁸Then he asked them, “How many loaves do you have? Go and see!” When they found out, they said, “Five, and two fish.”

³⁹Then he ordered them to have all sit down in groups on the green grass.

⁴⁰So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties.

⁴¹Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he said the blessings, broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish for all.

⁴²They all ate and were satisfied.

⁴³And they picked up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and fish.

⁴⁴Those who ate the loaves were five thousand men.⁹³

⁹³ The phrase τοὺς ἄρτους (“the loaves”) is omitted by P⁴⁵ **Σ** D W Q f^{1,13} 28. 565. 700. 2542 lat sa. Metzger (*A Textual Commentary*, 79) argues that “it is more likely that copyists were tempted to delete than to add τοὺς ἄρτους, for the presence of these words raises awkward questions why ‘loaves’ should be singled out with no mention of the fish (the Latin ms. c reads both).” Lane (*Mark*, 227, n. 95) believes that it is “perhaps under the influence of Mt. 14:21.” Marcus (*Mark 1–8*, 414), however, argues that it is

III. An Analysis of Mark 6:30-44

A. Introduction: 6:30-34

Mark's first feeding story begins with the return of the Twelve: the disciples came back from their missionary trip and reported their activities to Jesus (v. 30).⁹⁴ Form critically, this introduction probably belongs to 6:6b-13, the episode of the sending of the Twelve (at least 6:30 if not the entire unit).⁹⁵ The general consensus among scholars is that 6:30-34 do not belong to the original feeding narrative. For example, Taylor argues that this story is not part of the feeding of the five thousand because "the narrative is constructed by Mark as a prelude to the account of the breaking of bread in the wilderness."⁹⁶ From a redaction-critical point of view, v. 30 is full of favorite Markan terms like συνάγονται, ἐδίδαξαν, and ὅσα, as Ernest Best points out.⁹⁷ The reason for this redaction seems to be theological, because the OT references in 6:30-34, such as "the wilderness" and "the shepherd," fit with the theme of the feeding story of 6:35-44.

possible "that the words have been added by a later scribe to enhance the eucharistic symbolism of the passage."

⁹⁴ Mauser (*Christ in the Wilderness*, 134-36) divides 6:30-34 into two units: the first introductory unit (vv. 31-32) describes the return of the disciples and their rest in the wilderness; the second introductory unit (vv. 33-34) narrates the gathering of the multitudes and Jesus' compassion on them.

⁹⁵ Bultmann (*The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 340) believes that Mark 6:30-33 indicates "the connection with the sending out of the disciples reported in 6:7-13" while it supplies "what is presupposed for the following story of the feeding of the five thousand."

⁹⁶ Taylor, *St. Mark*, 318.

⁹⁷ Ernest Best (*Following Jesus: Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark* [JSNTSup 4; Sheffield: JSOT, 1981] 192-93) writes: "6.30 is probably Markan. It may well be that the tradition of the sending out of the Twelve possessed an ending in the pre-Markan material for the parallel in Luke 10 did (10.17-24). If there was such an ending Mark has re-shaped it. Whereas the earlier traditional material (3.14; 6.12) uses κηρύσσειν v.30 has Mark's favorite δίδασκειν, συνάγειν, while not appearing frequently in Mark, occurs elsewhere only in redactional seams (2.4.1; 5.21; 7.1); ὅσος is a Markan favorite and the particular use of it with ἀπαγγέλλειν and ποιεῖν is found also in 5.19 which is itself probably redactional."

Commentators are generally agreed that v. 30 comes from Mark's hand. This verse concludes the episode of Jesus sending out the Twelve in 6:6b-13, the story of the death of John the Baptist (6:14-29).⁹⁸ Hooker writes that "there seems no logical connection between the two themes, but the somewhat artificial insertion provides an interlude for the disciples to complete their mission."⁹⁹ Edwards, however, argues that this verse is not merely a connector or literary device but also theological. Mark's insertion of the death of John the Baptist between the sending and return of the disciples creates an A¹–B–A² sandwich construction that "draws mission and martyrdom, discipleship and death, into an inseparable relationship."¹⁰⁰

The historical present συναγόνται ("gathered together") indicates a change of event: it serves as a transition and introduction from the previous scene to the current one.¹⁰¹ Upon their return to Jesus from their missionary trip the disciples reported back to him. Apart from a disputed reading in 3:14, the noun ἀπόστολοι ("the apostles") occurs only in 6:30. It connects with the present active infinitive ἀποστέλλειν in 6:7 where Jesus "sent out" his disciples and gave them authority over evil spirits. Mark's

⁹⁸ This construction has been designated by many as an example of "the Markan sandwich" where Mark introduces a particular topic, abruptly begins a second topic, and then returns to the first subject. In our case, Mark first tells us that the apostles are sent out, and then he tells us how John the Baptist was murdered, and finally, he tells us that the Twelve return. Thus he creates a so-called "sandwich."

⁹⁹ Hooker, *St. Mark*, 158. Cf. also Best, *Following Jesus*, 192.

¹⁰⁰ Edwards, *Mark*, 189; see also his article "Markan Sandwiches: The Significance of Interpolations in Markan Narratives," *NovT* 31 (1989) 193-216; Edwards (ibid., 196) argues that "Mark sandwiches one passage into the middle of another with an intentional and discernible *theological purpose*. . . that is, the sandwiches emphasize the major motifs of the Gospel, especially the meaning of faith, discipleship, bearing witness, and the dangers of apostasy."

¹⁰¹ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 526-32; see also *BDF* §321 and Taylor, *St. Mark*, 46-47.

designation of the Twelve as ἀπόστολοι is not a title but primarily for their role as the “sent ones” or “missionaries.”¹⁰² Yet the term ἀπόστολοι seems to be more nuanced than either the term “sent ones” or “missionaries” in the contemporary sense.¹⁰³ “In the NT ἀπόστολος never means the act of sending or figuratively the object of sending. It always denotes a man who is sent, and sent with full authority.”¹⁰⁴ Therefore, representatives usually act in the name and authority of the congregation or person that sent them.

The verb ἀπήγγειλαν (“tell, proclaim, announce”) is generally used in the context of public revelation (cf. 5:14, its only other use in Mark).¹⁰⁵ By using this verb to describe the way in which the disciples report to Jesus, Mark seems to show their pride and egotism now that the mission has been completed successfully. The word ὅσα is a Markan favorite and it appears several times in this feeding narrative (vv. 30b, 33, 39, 41, and 42). “All that they had done and taught” summarizes the disciples’ activities in 6:12-13. What the disciples did was much like the deeds of Jesus: casting out demons and healing the sick; and what they taught was also in line with the teaching of Jesus: proclaiming the message of the kingdom of God and calling for repentance (cf. 1:21; 6:6b). By describing that the disciples reported back to Jesus, Mark emphasizes the

¹⁰² Best, *Following Jesus*, 193.

¹⁰³ Taylor (*St. Mark*, 319) argues that “apparently Mark uses the name because he has just used οἱ μαθηταί of the disciples of John (vi. 29). He does not use it again of the disciples of Jesus, but continues to employ οἱ μαθηταί and οἱ δώδεκα. This usage illustrates the primitive character of Mk, for at the time when the Gospel was written οἱ ἀπόστολοι was in common use.”

¹⁰⁴ Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, “ἀπόστολος,” *TDNT*, 1. 421.

¹⁰⁵ Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary*, 128; cf. also Julius Schniewind, “ἀπαγγέλλω,” *TDNT*, 1. 64-67.

essential relationship between the mission of the Twelve and that of Jesus: the mission of the Twelve was an extension and part of Jesus' own mission. Therefore, the reporting activity to Jesus demonstrates that, as ἀπόστολοι, the Twelve are dependent on Jesus' authority.

In the story, Jesus wanted to have a private meal with the disciples while giving them a little rest in a wilderness place (v. 31a). But they were so inundated with people “coming and going” that they did not have time to eat (v. 31b). The phrase εἰς ἔρημον τόπον (“to a wilderness place”; cf. vv. 32, 35) here reintroduces the wilderness theme Mark started in the beginning of the gospel (1:3) and sets up the locale for what will happen in the following vv. 35-44.¹⁰⁶ The usual translation for εἰς ἔρημον τόπον is “to a quiet, solitary, or deserted place” (e.g., *NIV* and *NRSV*). But as Hooker points out, the phrase “is perhaps intended to convey more than the idea of isolation, since the adjective translated ‘lonely’ (ἐρημος) can be used as a noun to mean ‘desert’ or ‘wilderness’ (see 1.4, 12): the spot thus provides a suitable setting for a miracle recalling the provision of manna in the wilderness.”¹⁰⁷ In the beginning of the gospel, Mark opens his story by quoting the prophet Isaiah (1:2b-3):

Behold, I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way.
the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

¹⁰⁶ Frans Neirynck (*Duality in Mark: Contributions to the Study of the Markan Redaction* [BETL 31; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1972] 94-95) treats κατ' ἰδίαν εἰς ἔρημον τόπον as a “double statement” with the expression εἰς ἔρημον τόπον κατ' ἰδίαν in v. 32.

¹⁰⁷ Hooker, *St. Mark*, 165.

“Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”¹⁰⁸

Immediately in v. 4, Mark shows that John is baptizing and preaching in the wilderness (ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ). Mark further informs the audience that after John there will come one that is more powerful (v. 7). Now that John the Baptist has been brutally murdered (6:27-28) by Herod Antipas, Jesus is in the wilderness with the crowd again. Teaching and feeding his people, Jesus prepares and leads them into the eschaton—the kingdom of God. Thus, 6:31 not only recalls the early motif and locale of John’s call for repentance (1:3-4) and the places of Jesus’ activities (his temptation in 1:12-13, his prayer in 1:35, and his retreat in 1:45) but also evokes Israel’s experience of the Exodus in the wilderness (Exod 16:1, 2, 10, 14). The verb ἀναπαύσασθε used intransitively means to rest or take one’s rest. It allude to Ps 23:2b (LXX 22:2b) where Yhwh as the shepherd cares for the psalmist by making him lie down in grassy meadows and restful waters. Thus, with the Exodus as background, not only the wilderness scene is introduced but the shepherd is also implied, preparing the audience for v. 34.

The “coming and going” of many people may suggest the result of a successful mission of the Twelve. However, the disciples were so busy attending the crowd that they did not even have time to rest or eat. Mark adds the γάρ clause to explain the reason why the disciples did not have a chance to eat. The word πολλοί (“many”) is a Markan favorite: it is used several times in this narrative alone (vv. 33, 34, 35). The frequent use of πολλοί “emphasizes the greatness of the need Jesus confronts; the reference in 6:34 to

¹⁰⁸ Although Mark attributes the entire quotation to Isaiah, it is a conflation of Exod 23:20; Mal 3:1; and Isa 40:3.

the many things Jesus teaches points to the sufficiency of his response to this challenge.”¹⁰⁹ The verb ἐὺκαίρουν (“have time or opportunity”) is a *hapax legomenon* in Mark. It has the nuance of finding both the opportunity and the leisure for doing things. The mention of φαγεῖν (“to eat” or “consume”) echoes 3:20 where the similar situation had happened. The aorist infinitive φαγεῖν continues the eating motif from the episode of the death of John the Baptist, preparing for the eating theme in the following feeding narrative (vv. 36-37).¹¹⁰

Jesus and the disciples retreated by boat to a wilderness place (v. 32). While the πλοῖον (“boat”) is an important means of living and transportation for the people in the first half of the Gospel of Mark (1:19-20; 3:9; 4:1), it is also related to the teaching and wonders of Jesus (4:36-41; 5:2, 18, 21-24; 6:45, 47-52; 8:10-14). The phrase κατ’ ἰδίαν (“by themselves”) also appears in the episode of the Transfiguration before Peter, James, and John (9:2). Otherwise, the phrase κατ’ ἰδίαν is used in situations where Jesus gives instructions to the disciples (4:34; 9:28; 13:3). With the repetition of the phrase εἰς ἔρημον τόπον in v. 32, Mark has firmly established the setting for his first feeding story. To be sure, as in v. 31, Mark purposely wants his audience to evoke the memories of the wandering of the Israelites in the wilderness and the wondrous feedings that happened there (Exod 16:1-35; Num 11:1-9; Pss 78:20b-29; 105:40-41).

¹⁰⁹ Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 405-6.

¹¹⁰ Rudolf Pesch (*Das Markusevangelium* [2 vols.; HTKNT 2; Freiburg: Herder, 1976] 1. 346) even argues that Mark uses the word φαγεῖν to unfold the whole section of 6:30-8:26.

Jesus' desire to have a private meal with his disciples was interrupted because many saw and recognized it and hurried on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them (v. 33). Jesus and the disciples went by boat in v. 32 to "a wilderness place" which is not a specific location. It thus seems strange that the crowd in the narrative knew where Jesus and his disciples were going and arrived *there* ahead of them. It is possible that Mark inherited this directly from the oral tradition which assumes that the crowd knew where Jesus and the disciples were going.¹¹¹ The verb εἶδον ("they saw") is the so-called "impersonal plural," a favorite expression frequently employed by Mark.¹¹² It is an alleged Aramaism because "the use of a plural verb with no subject other than the quite general one 'people' is common in Aramaic as a substitute for the passive."¹¹³

Upon disembarking from the boat, Jesus saw a big crowd of people already there waiting for him. Instead of being angry with the crowd for preventing him and his disciples from having a private meal and a much-needed rest, Jesus had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he began to teach them many things (v. 34). Bultmann identifies the verb ἐξελθών ("come out of") as Mark's editing which is frequently used for the purpose of place connection—"it merely says that Jesus

¹¹¹ Julius Wellhausen (*Das Evangelium Marci: übersetzt und erklärt* [2nd ed. Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1909] 47-48) draws attention to the historical difficulties created by this verse. But Marcus (*Mark 1-8*, 417) is probably right when he argues that Mark's purpose here is theological rather than historical because "the crowd's hunt for Jesus underlines the spiritual hunger and hope he has stirred up in them."

¹¹² J. K. Elliott, *The Language and Style of the Gospel of Mark: An Edition of C. H. Turner's "Notes on Marcan Usage" Together with Other Comparable Studies* (NovTSup 71; Leiden: Brill, 1993) 39-42.

¹¹³ Taylor, *St. Mark*, 47; see also Matthew Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (3rd ed.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998) 126-28 and E. J. Pryke, *Redactional Style in the Marcan Gospel* (SNTSMS 33; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 107-15.

went ‘from thence’ to the scene of the following story.”¹¹⁴ Because ἐξελθὼν does not mention the boat, some argue that it might refer to Jesus’ coming out of Jairus’ s house and try to tie this feeding story with 5:43.¹¹⁵ But this suggestion seems unlikely because it is possible that Mark simply assumes that “the boat” is understood here since the same verb is used in 5:2. Also it is hard to imagine that five thousand people would sit on “Jairus’ s front lawn” waiting to be fed.¹¹⁶

Besides in v. 34, the verb ἐσπλαγγνίσθη (“to have pity or compassion”) appears three other times in Mark (1:41; 8:2; 9:22). The noun σπλάγχνα can be a “portion of man’s inward parts as the seat of feelings.”¹¹⁷ The verb is used in the NT only by or about Jesus (cf. Matt 9:36; 14:14; Luke 7:13; 10:33; 15:20). “It is always used to describe the attitude of Jesus and it characterizes the divine nature of His acts.”¹¹⁸ It usually suggests tangible help rather than mere cognizant sympathy.

Although 6:34b does not begin with the typical Markan conjunction γάρ, it is almost certain that this ὅτι clause is a Markan redaction because it is full of Markan terms.¹¹⁹ Shepherd is an image commonly used for kings and gods throughout the

¹¹⁴ Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 339.

¹¹⁵ Paul J. Achtemeier, “Toward the Isolation of Pre-Markan Miracle Catenae,” *JBL* 89 (1970) 281 and Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, 1. 346-47.

¹¹⁶ Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) 323.

¹¹⁷ Helmut Köster, “σπλάγχνον/σπλαγγνίζομαι,” *TDNT*, 7. 551.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 553.

¹¹⁹ Ernest Best (*The Temptation and the Passion: The Markan Soteriology* [2nd ed.; SNTSMS 2; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990] 76) argues that “vi. 34a may have lain in the tradition, but 34b is a Markan construction and must be taken as qualifying 34a. σπλαγγνίζομαι is also found in the

ancient Near East. In the OT, Yhwh is depicted repeatedly as the shepherd of Israel (Gen 49:24; Ps 23:1; 80:1; Isa 40:11; Jer 31:10). This image was then picked up by the NT writers and applied to Jesus as the true shepherd of his people (John 10:1-18; Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 2:25). As Jack W. Vancil writes:

The symbol suggests the concept of righteous government and often appears in contexts where the subject of justice is prominent. The king as a shepherd and as a representative of the gods was expected to rule with justice and to show kindness in counseling, protecting, and guiding the people through every difficulty.¹²⁰

“Sheep without a shepherd,” then, is an image from Israel’s history when people were without spiritual or human leadership (Num 27:17; 1 Kgs 22:17/2 Chr 18:16; Ezek 34:5; Zech 10:2; Jdt 11:19). Although this allusion probably points to both Moses and David, the shepherds of Israel’s past (Exod 3:1 and 1 Sam 16:11, respectively), the phrase resonates most closely with Num 27:15-17 where Moses asks Yhwh to appoint a leader in his place so that the congregation “may not be like sheep without a shepherd.” Yhwh appointed Joshua (Ἰησοῦς in Greek), “a man in whom is the spirit,” to succeed Moses (27:18). It will be Joshua’s job to lead the Israelites out of the wilderness into Canaan, the Promised Land of rest. By appealing to the Moses-Joshua typology, Mark reminds his audience that Jesus is the “prophet like Moses” whom Yhwh has promised to send (Deut 18:15-18, 34:10-12). Just like the Ἰησοῦς of the Exodus who led Israel into the

doublet viii. 1-9. Either usage may have inspired the other, but since vi. 34a contains a biblical quotation and is not directly connected to the miracle of the feeding it would appear more likely that this has been formed by Mark using the key-word which he met in the other tradition.”

¹²⁰ Jack W. Vancil, “Sheep, Shepherd,” *ABD*, 5. 1188.

Promised Land, so Ἰησοῦς will lead his people into new Promised Land—the kingdom of God.

The phrase ἤρξατο διδάσκειν (“he began to teach”) is a characteristic Markan usage that often introduces especially significant material (4:1; 6:2; 8:31).¹²¹ Jesus’ heartfelt compassion is not just for the physical need of the crowd but also its leaderless situation, just like Israel in the OT in need of guidance and protection. In his gospel, Mark frequently emphasizes that Jesus taught (1:21-22; 2:13; 9:31; 12:38; cf. also 7:14-23). Mark often uses διδάσκαλος (“teacher”) as a title to describe Jesus (4:38; 5:35; 9:17, 38; 10:17, 20, 35; 12:14, 19, 32; 13:1; 14:14) and this title becomes an important part of his Christology.¹²² Because the terms διδάσκαλος, διδαχή, and διδάσκειν appear so frequently in the Markan seams, Ernest Best even argues that Mark desired to portray Jesus as a teacher rather than as an exorcist.¹²³

In the OT, teaching and learning are often associated with bread and wine (Prov 9:5; cf. Sir 15:3; 24:19-22; 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 77:13-15). Mark follows this tradition in portraying Jesus as a teacher. Of course, for Mark, Jesus is not just another teacher among many at that time. He is the supreme and definitive teacher with authority and

¹²¹ For the use of ἤρξατο as an auxiliary verb, see Taylor, *St. Mark*, 48.

¹²² For Mark’s intention to portray Jesus as a teacher, see Paul J. Achtemeier, “He Taught Them Many Things: Reflections on Marcan Christology,” *CBQ* 42 (1980) 465-81.

¹²³ Best (*The Temptation and the Passion*, 72) writes: “Thus διδάσκειν and its cognates are favorites of Mark. If we examine in this way the ‘seams’ between the incidents then Mark leaves us with the impression that the main activity of Jesus was teaching; note especially x.1, where teaching is said to be his custom; this appears much more regularly in the seams than does ‘healing’ or ‘exorcism, and whereas the incidents recording these gradually disappear towards the end of the book, the teaching of Jesus continues right through to the Passion itself.” Cf. also Mark’s use of the titles ῥαββί (“Rabbi”) and ῥαββουνί (the Aramaic word for ῥαββί) for Jesus in 9:5; 10:51; 11:21; 14:45.

power sent from God (1:22, 27; 6:2) and provides the authoritative interpretation of the Scriptures (7:6-13; 10:2-12; 12:18-27, 28-34, 35-37; 13:31). C. E. B. Cranfield suggests that the word πολλά is used here adverbially to mean “at length”: “the meaning is not that Jesus taught them a great number of different things, but that he taught the one message of the kingdom of God persistently.”¹²⁴ Thus, καὶ ἤρξατο διδάσκειν αὐτοὺς πολλά could be understood as “so he began to teach them at great length.”

Teaching the crowd seems to be Jesus’ first public appearance since John the Baptist was brutally murdered by King Herod (6:27-28). As king, not only does Herod not care about his people, holding a lavish birthday banquet to entertain his high officials, military commanders, and leading men of Galilee (6:21), but also involves himself in an atrocious murder. In contrast to the dubious “kingship” of Herod, Jesus shows that he will serve as God’s promised shepherd-king with divine compassion for his shepherdless people by teaching and feeding them.¹²⁵ Herod’s party ended in the murder of John the Baptist and it was truly a banquet of death. In a way, Jesus’ feeding of the five thousand is his public response to John’s murder. In the face of a banquet of death, Jesus will host his people on green grass and give them a meal with only a meager five loaves and two fish (6:38-42). Jesus offers a banquet of life.

In summary, it is generally agreed that 6:30-34 do not belong to the original feeding story. Mark’s redactional work is evident in words like συνάγονται, ὅσα, πολλοί,

¹²⁴ C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (CGTC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959) 217; cf. also *BDAG*, s.v.

¹²⁵ Heil, *The Gospel of Mark as Model for Action*, 143. For human leaders as shepherds in ANE cultures as well as in Israel’s history and biblical usage, see Vancil, “Sheep, Shepherd,” in *ABD*, 5. 1187-90.

and ἐδίδαξαν. The wilderness setting and the purposeful allusion to Num 27:17 indicate the Christological nature of Mark's intention—he wants the audience to think of Jesus in terms of the eschatological prophet.

B. The Situation: 6:35-38

There is an extensive dialogue between Jesus and the disciples in these verses which heighten the dramatic tension in this feeding story. Because Jesus taught the crowd at length (or many things), the hour was late—probably late in the afternoon. The disciples became concerned for the crowd (v. 35). They were well aware of the time and informed Jesus that the time was late, maybe too late. Mark uses the almost identical phrase καὶ ἤδη ὥρας πολλῆς twice here to emphasize the lateness of the hour. This may have been the reason that prompts the dismissal suggestion of the crowd from the disciples in v. 36. Robert H. Gundry suggests that

the doubling of the reference to mid-to-late afternoon, the doubling of the emphasis on this temporal reference with a repetition of ἤδη, “already,” the intensification of this double emphasis with a forward placement of ἤδη in both of its occurrences and with an ellipsis of the verb in the second temporal reference, the description of the place as deserted, and the emphasis on this description through the forward placement of ἔρημος, “deserted,” all give the disciples’ following suggestion a large amount of reasonableness.¹²⁶

The use of οἱ μαθηταί here instead of οἱ ἀπόστολοι (cf. v. 30) may be an indication of the end of Mark's redaction. The phrase ἔρημός ἐστιν ὁ τόπος is probably contained in the pre-Markan tradition that made Mark attach the return of the disciples to this feeding story since both stories share the same wilderness theme (cf. ἔρημον τόπον in

¹²⁶ Gundry, *Mark*, 324.

vv. 31 and 32). Nevertheless, the third mention of the wilderness place certainly reinforces Mark's wilderness motif.

Since they were in a wilderness place, there was little possibility of obtaining food for such a large crowd. The disciples' suggestion was to dismiss the crowd so that they could go and get food for themselves in the neighboring towns and villages (v. 36). From the disciples' perspective, this is a reasonable suggestion. But their good intention loses sight of the belief that as a good shepherd, Jesus could not dismiss his sheep to find their own food. The suggestion from the disciples becomes pitiless and callous when compared with Jesus' compassion for the crowd (v. 34). Gundry argues that "the ἔρημος τόπος, 'deserted place,' is different from the ἐρημία, 'wilderness,' in 8:4 and has farms and towns in the surrounding region (v 36). Therefore we should not suppose that the typology of God's people gathered in the wilderness as in olden times is hovering in the background."¹²⁷ But his argument misses the point because Mark probably does not have a specific location in mind, whether it be the ἔρημον τόπον or ἐρημία. His main interest is to make a theological statement and relate this feeding story with that of the OT Exodus event. As Mauser points out:

Although there are several remarks concerning the wilderness in the New Testament which simply reflect the natural conditions of the Land in Palestine, they are remarkably rare. In the majority of the cases, whenever the wilderness is mentioned, the thought of the New Testament writer is not directed to the geographical disposition of the country, but to the memory of the basic action of God which took place in the wilderness in the course of Israel's history. . . .

¹²⁷ Ibid., 328.

Ἐρημος is, therefore, primarily used as an absolute noun needing no specifying attribute; it is not a certain locality on the map of the Middle East, but the place of God's mighty acts, significant for all believers of all times and places.¹²⁸

Furthermore, since we do not know the proximity between the location of the feeding and surrounding farms and villages, we have no reason not to believe that the place is in the wilderness.

The disciples' suggestion seems to be reasonable given the lateness of time and the wilderness of place and a simple and good way for the crowd to satisfy their hunger. But Jesus did not concur with their suggestion. He insists that the disciples provide the crowd something to eat (v.37a).¹²⁹ Jesus' answer is plain and clear: "Give them something to eat yourselves!" The redundant use of the participle here (ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς) is due to Semitic interference.¹³⁰ The emphatic use of the personal pronoun ὑμεῖς ("you yourselves") indicates Jesus' determination and that his command is not negotiable—the disciples should find a solution to feed the people rather than sending them away to get their own food. Mark shows that Jesus not only has compassion to teach the people but also cares for their physical needs. Lane writes:

Jesus knows from the beginning what he will do and the exchange with the Twelve moves toward a well-defined end. His instructions to the disciples, which perplex and baffle them, are intended to lead them to understanding. The Twelve, however, display an increasing lack of understanding; their attitude of disrespect

¹²⁸ Mauser, *Christ in the Wilderness*, 14.

¹²⁹ Eduard Schweizer (*The Good News According to Mark* [trans. Donald H. Madvig; Atlanta: John Knox, 1970] 138) argues that "probably the challenge to the disciples is inserted only because it shows their lack of understanding (cf. Num 11:22). This specific task which will bring faith to fulfillment also exposes this lack of understanding."

¹³⁰ Taylor, *St. Mark*, 63; cf. also Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 649-50.

and incredulity declares that the conduct of Jesus is beyond their comprehension.¹³¹

The disciples' question clearly shows their lack of understanding of Jesus' command (v. 37b).¹³² They are essentially saying to Jesus, "How in the world do you expect us to get the money and buy food for such a big crowd?" "The boldness of the querulous question" shows that the disciples were obviously stunned and confused by the response from Jesus.¹³³ They remembered that Jesus had earlier instructed them before their missionary trip: "take no bread, no bag, and no money in your belts" (6:8).¹³⁴ Now Jesus expects them to feed the crowd! "Jesus' command assumes that the disciples should serve as extensions of his own miracle-working power and authority. The disciples, however, seek to understand Jesus' command in terms of what they themselves are capable of doing."¹³⁵ They were concerned about the impossible amount of money that would be needed to buy food for a crowd of such multitude. The doubt of the disciples is captured by Mark using the deliberative subjunctive ἀγοράσωμεν ("should we

¹³¹ Lane, *Mark*, 228.

¹³² The theme of the blindness of the disciples has dominated in the first half of the Gospel of Mark. Jesus has shown his authority time and again in ways which should have led to the recognition by the disciples that he is the Messiah. Ironically, all are blind to these signs except the demons (1:23-24, 34; 3:11-12; 5:6-8). The tension created by the lack of understanding (or the blindness) of the disciples will not be resolved until 8:29 with Peter's confession about Jesus' true identity, following the story of Jesus' healing a blind man in Bethsaida (8:22-26).

¹³³ Taylor, *St. Mark*, 321; contra the sarcastic interpretation of Marcus (*Mark 1-8*, 407).

¹³⁴ Hooker (*St. Mark*, 166) argues that "perhaps Mark has forgotten that earlier command—or perhaps he has placed the two narratives in close proximity in order to hint that the miracle that follows is about something more significant than ordinary bread."

¹³⁵ Stein, *Mark*, 314.

buy”).¹³⁶ According to Matthew, one *denarius* is the normal wage for a day laborer (20:2). Thus, two hundred *denarii* would represent the pay a common laborer would earn in a period of about eight months (Matt 20:2-15). Yes, two hundred *denarii* is not a small amount by any means. But here the issue does not seem to be the money but faith (4:40). It seems impossible to provide food for a crowd of such a size from the outset, but even if the disciples had that kind of money, they probably would still complain that the money is not enough to buy bread for all to eat (cf. John 6:7). The future indicative δώσομεν (“to give”) has caused some difficulties for the scribes because the future δώσομεν is “corrected” to the subjunctive δώσωμεν in some MSS.¹³⁷ “The change to future indicative after the deliberative subjunctive is very harsh. It is not surprising that many MSS. read δώσωμεν—a natural improvement.”¹³⁸

Jesus did not directly answer the disciples’ question. Rather, he asked the disciples what the status of the present food supply was (v. 38a). The double imperatives (ὑπάγετε ἴδετε) used here are emphatic and decisive. When inquired, the disciples found out and told Jesus the dire situation of five loaves and two fish (v. 38b). It is interesting

¹³⁶ Wallace (*Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 465) writes: “The deliberative subjunctive asks either a *real* or *rhetorical* question. In general, it can be said that the deliberative subjunctive is ‘merely the hortatory turned into a question.’ The semantics of the two kinds of questions are often quite different. Both imply some doubt about the response, but the real question is usually in the *cognitive* area (such as ‘How can we . . . ?’ in which the inquiry is about the means), while the *rhetorical* question is *volitive* (e. g., ‘Should we . . . ?’ in which the question has to do with moral obligation).”

¹³⁷ The verb δώσομεν, attested by P⁴⁵ A B L Δ 2427. 2542 *pc*, is problematic syntactically. Some scribes realize the problem and try to correct it with the first aorist subjunctive δώσωμεν which is attested by D N f⁴³ 28. 33. 565. 892. 1424 *pc*. A variant of second aorist subjunctive δῶμεν is also attested by W Θ f¹ A1. Taylor (*St. Mark*, 322) argues that the reading δώσωμεν is probably correct because a change to the simple future after the deliberative subjunctive would be improbable.

¹³⁸ Cranfield, *St. Mark*, 217; cf. *BDF* §366.

that the disciples should have any bread at all given the context of 6:8. But not only did they manage to come up with five loaves of bread, they also had two fish with them. The loaves were probably made of barley (cf. John 6:9) and “barley loaves were the cheap bread of the poorer classes.”¹³⁹ The fish were most likely preserved fish—dried and salted (cf. ὀψάριον in John 6:9).¹⁴⁰ “The term ‘bread’ is used seventeen times between 6:8 and 8:19 and provides a submotif to the whole section, highlighted by two serious misunderstandings about bread by the disciples (6:52; 8:17-19).”¹⁴¹ The deliberate mention of “bread” here combined with “the wilderness place” (v. 35) evokes the giving of manna in the wilderness in the OT (Exodus 16).

In summary, the exchange between Jesus and the disciples indicates a ministerial tension—the disciples want to dismiss the crowd to find their own food while Jesus insists that the disciples should feed the crowd. As earlier in the gospel, Mark continues to show the misunderstanding and ignorance of the disciples about the true identity of Jesus.

C. The Feeding: 6:39-42

At Jesus’ direction, the crowd sits down on the green grass in groups (v. 39). The transitive verb ἀνακλιναι is a *hapax legomenon* in Mark and means “to cause to recline at a meal,” “place as guest.”¹⁴² The word συμπόσια is also a *hapax legomenon* in the NT

¹³⁹ C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (2nd ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978) 275.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Donahue and Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 206.

¹⁴² *BDAG*, s.v.; cf. *BDF* §392, 4.

and it literally means “drinking party.”¹⁴³ The phrase συμπόσια συμπόσια here means “in groups” in a distributive sense.¹⁴⁴ It describes the orderly sitting arrangement of the crowd to facilitate the distribution of the food. Some have taken this orderly grouping of the people to mean symbolically the teacher-student relationship in the teaching context. It is argued that “the use of ‘recline’ and ‘symposium’ would evoke for Mark’s Greco-Roman readers the image of the formal dinner party, which was often the setting for significant teaching (e.g., Plato’s *Symposium*).”¹⁴⁵ However, a συμπόσιον is more than just significant teaching; it often involves a dialogue and/or argument among the participants. According to Peter K. Nelson, several features are included in a symposium genre:

a respected central figure displays his wisdom and insight at a banquet through dialogue and dispute. Other typical characters are host, comic, intruder, doctor, drunk and lovers. Some *fait divers* triggers a dialogue in which there is often a conflict involving the chief guest. Places at table are perceived to be important and can provoke conflicts between guests.¹⁴⁶

With such a big crowd, it is hard to imagine Jesus having a dialogue and argument with people. Furthermore, Jesus’ teaching activity has already been narrated through a Markan redaction earlier in v. 34b, the use of συμπόσια συμπόσια seems to mean simply

¹⁴³ BDAG, s.v.; cf. also BDF §493, 2. Taylor, *St. Mark*, 323.

¹⁴⁴ BDAG, s.v.

¹⁴⁵ Donahue and Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 207.

¹⁴⁶ Peter K. Nelson *Leadership and Discipleship: A Study of Luke 22:24-30* (SBLDS 138; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994) 52-53.

an orderly arrangement in groups.¹⁴⁷

On the green pasture, the sheep now have their own compassionate shepherd. The situation of “sheep without a shepherd” has been rectified. As discussed earlier in v. 31, the phrase ἐπὶ τῷ χλωρῷ χόρτῳ (“on the green grass”) alludes to Ps 23:1-2 (LXX 22:1-2) where Yhwh provides an eternal rest for the psalmist. The vivid description of the green grass then may allude to the eschatological change of the wilderness into the land of rest for the people of God in the eschaton.¹⁴⁸ Stein argues that such an allusion is unlikely because “the actual verbal correspondence between ‘green pastures’ (τόπον χλόης) and ‘green grass’ (χλωρῷ χόρτῳ) is not great.”¹⁴⁹ But his argument misses the point because in an allusion “the degree of verbal correspondence between a given passage and the source to which it is said to allude is somewhat less than that of a quotation and may, in fact, be virtually absent.”¹⁵⁰ Thus the green grass here is not merely coincidental; it works perfectly with the shepherd-sheep imagery in v. 34. It makes very clear the picture of a good shepherd who tends passionately for his sheep.

¹⁴⁷ It seems that the original feeding story lacks the teaching of Jesus. Thus the purpose of Mark’s redaction is to link the teaching as part of the feeding story to show that Jesus does not only provide material food for the crowd but also has compassion for their spiritual need by teaching them many things.

¹⁴⁸ Mauser, *Christ in the Wilderness*, 137. Opinions vary in interpreting τῷ χλωρῷ χόρτῳ (“the green grass”). Schweizer (*Mark*, 139) argues that “it is doubtful whether the mention of the ‘green grass’ reveals a glimmer of the hope of the Apocalyptic who believed that in the endtime the wilderness would become a fruitful land.” On the other hand, citing Isa 35:1-2 and 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 29:5-8, Marcus (*Mark* 1:8, 408) argues that “blooming grass, like the Passover/exodus typology in general, points forward to an expected eschatological recapitulation of the exodus event.”

¹⁴⁹ Stein, *Mark*, 315.

¹⁵⁰ Neil R. Parker, *The Marcan Portrayal of the “Jewish” Unbeliever: A Function of the Marcan Reference to Jewish Scripture: The Theological Basis of a Literary Construct* (SBL 79; New York: Peter Lang, 2008) 14.

Mark continues to develop on this OT allusion in v. 41 to show Jesus as the shepherd providing a meal for his flock (Ps 23:5a [22:5a]).¹⁵¹ By working in the green grass to be part of the wilderness motif, Mark intricately weaves in the theme of Psalm 23 as the secondary line to support his claim that Jesus is a shepherd appointed by God (cf. Isa 40:11).

Mark further clarifies in v. 40 that the crowd was sitting down in groups of hundreds and fifties (literally “by a hundred and by fifty”). In the NT, the word *πρασιά* is a *hapax legomenon* and literally means “garden plot” or “garden bed.”¹⁵² The phrase *πρασιὰν πρασιάι* here means “group by group.” Mark continues to use the theme of wilderness in the Exodus to evoke the imagery of the arrangements of the Mosaic camp in the wilderness. In the book of Exodus, Moses arranges the Israelites in groups of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens for the reason of delegation of authority (18:21, 25; cf. Deut 1:15).¹⁵³ Since earlier in v. 34 Mark had referred to the crowd as “like sheep

¹⁵¹ Commenting on Ps 23:5, David Noel Freedman (“The Twenty-Third Psalm,” in *Pottery, Poetry and Prophecy: Collected Essays on Hebrew Poetry* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1980] 296) writes: “In Ps. 78, the setting of the table is located in the wilderness, belongs to the story of the wanderings, and is symbolic of the miraculous provision of water and food for the thirsty and starving people. . . . This was the banquet provided by the divine shepherd for his flock: the transition from shepherd to host and from sheep to people becomes quite understandable in the context of the Exodus and wilderness sojourn. The passage in Ps. 23 is to be understood in the same way. The poet evokes the memory of the bountiful provision in the wilderness in expressing his utter confidence in Yahweh to provide for him and those like him in similar circumstances.”

¹⁵² *BDAG*, s.v.; cf. *BDF* §493.

¹⁵³ It seems unlikely that the seating arrangement of v. 40 refers to a militant march in the desert as argued by H. Montefiore, “Revolt in the Desert? (Mark vi. 30ff.),” *NTS* 8 (1961–62) 135–41. As R. T. France (*The Gospel of Mark*, 261) points out, “Jesus’ response to the πρόβατα μὴ ἔχοντα ποιμένα is compassion and teaching, not military organization, and the description of the seated companies as συμπόσια and πρασιάι would be curiously incongruous if they were understood as a martial parade.”

without a shepherd,” it is fitting here that as the new shepherd of Israel Jesus should organize his people in this orderly way. Lane contends that

the multitude who have been instructed concerning the Kingdom is characterized as the people of the new exodus who have been summoned to the wilderness to experience messianic grace. Through these elements of the wilderness complex Mark portrays Jesus as the eschatological Savior, the second Moses who transforms the leaderless flock into the people of God.¹⁵⁴

Thus, this grouping may suggest the orderly gathering of God’s people in the last days.

Stein, however, does not see the connection between the Exodus grouping and this verse because “the parallel is far from exact.” He argues that “they are probably another example of Markan duality and simply mean ‘groups of between fifty and one hundred.’”¹⁵⁵

Mark does not tell the audience how the miracle was performed.¹⁵⁶ He simply says that Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish, looked up to the heaven, said the blessings, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples to distribute among the people (v. 41). These actions are very eucharistic like those of the Last Supper in 14:22 and the terminology of both meals is almost identical:

Mark 6:41

λαβὼν τοὺς πέντε ἄρτους
εὐλόγησεν
κατέκλασεν τοὺς ἄρτους

Mark 14:22

λαβὼν ἄρτον
εὐλόγησας
ἔκλασεν

¹⁵⁴ Lane, *Mark*, 229-30.

¹⁵⁵ Stein, *Mark*, 315.

¹⁵⁶ Various attempts have been made by some to find “a natural explanation” for this feeding story (H. van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus* [NovTSup 8; Leiden: Brill, 1965] 627-31). But as Hooker (*St. Mark*, 164) points out, since the question “what happened?” is unanswerable, it is more rewarding to ask “what truth about Jesus the evangelist is trying to convey to his readers in retelling this story.”

ἐδίδου τοῖς μαθηταῖς

ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς

To be sure, these actions are all common Jewish customs before and during meals in which the head (usually the husband/father) gives thanks for the bread, breaks it, and distributes it to the rest of the family members. What Jesus does here is common for any faithful Jew at that time. In contrast to the Last Supper, however, there is no reference to wine here; and also fish were not mentioned in 14:22.¹⁵⁷ The arguments about the relation between these two passages have gone on for quite a while.¹⁵⁸ Best asserts that “it is by no means clear if Mark intends the feedings to be understood eucharistically; there are good grounds for believing, whatever is true of the pre-Markan or post-Markan interpretation, that he understood them of the appropriation of Jesus’ teaching.”¹⁵⁹ But regardless of the pros and cons of arguments about the eucharistic interpretation, the similarities between this feeding story and the Last Supper outweigh their differences. Mark’s first feeding story seems to be an anticipation of the Last Supper. Taylor might be right when he writes that “the meal in the wilderness belongs to the same cycle as the Last Supper, with the important exception that, for intelligible reasons, it lacks a

¹⁵⁷ Schweizer (*Mark*, 139) argues that “the description of the distribution probably has been deliberately made to agree with Mark 14:22, which explains why the distribution of the fish is not mentioned until the end.”

¹⁵⁸ E.g., for arguments in favor of a eucharistic interpretation, see Richardson, “The Feeding of the Five Thousand: Mark 6:34-44,” 144-49 and van Iersel, “Die wunderbare Speisung und das Abendmahl in der Synoptischen Tradition (Mk vi 35-44 par., viii 1-20 par.)” 167-94; for the opposing argument, see Boobyer, “The Eucharistic Interpretation of the Miracles of the Loaves in St. Mark’s Gospel,” 161-71. For a “middle” position with regards to this issue, see John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (vol. 2. ABRL. New York: Doubleday, 1994) 950-67, esp. 964-65.

¹⁵⁹ Best, *Disciples and Discipleship*, 156.

reference to the death of Jesus; it is a foreshadowing of Messianic Feast, and thus, of the perfecting of the Kingdom.”¹⁶⁰

The other possible interpretation is to treat this feeding as an eschatological banquet or messianic banquet—the symbolic meal of festive food in anticipation of the forthcoming Messiah in the eschaton (Isa 25:6-8; 55:1-5; 62:9; Ezek 39:17-20; Prov 9:1-6; 2 Apoc. Bar. 29:5-8; 1 Enoch 62:13-15; 3 Enoch 48:10). In the OT, the prophet Isaiah envisions an eschatological meal (Isa 25:6-8): Yhwh will prepare a feast of rich food and aged wines for all peoples; he will destroy the enemies and swallow up death forever, and he will remove disgrace of his people from all the earth. Mark’s first feeding story evokes the imagery of Isaiah’s banquet—the abundance of food provided by Yhwh in the eschatological age.

The verb παρατίθημι (“to set or place before”) is sometimes used in the context of offering food and beverage to someone as a sign of welcome or hospitality (LXX Gen 18:8; 24:33; LXX 2 Sam 12:20; Luke 11:6; Acts 16:34). “In contrast to the desire of the disciples to get rid of the people (v. 36), Jesus makes the disciples welcome them as guests in a household.”¹⁶¹ Taylor argues that the use of the imperfect ἐδίδου (“he gave”) seems intentional by Mark to suggest successive distributions of bread.¹⁶² Marcus writes that the verb ἐδίδου perhaps indicates “the repetition of the action because the supply of

¹⁶⁰ Taylor, *St. Mark*, 324.

¹⁶¹ Donahue and Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 207.

¹⁶² Taylor, *St. Mark*, 324. Without mentioning the eucharistic nature of the loaves, Schweizer (*Mark*, 139) states simply “the tense of the verb ‘he gave’ implies that Jesus passed bread to the disciples again and again.”

eucharistic loaves is never exhausted.”¹⁶³ On the other hand, Stein maintains that “it is best, however, to see this as an iterative imperfect in which Jesus was continually giving bread to his disciples as they distributed what they had been given and continually return for more.”¹⁶⁴

The feeding story now reached its climax—the crowd not only ate but also was satisfied (v. 42). “They all ate and were satisfied” may allude to the abundant food to the people’s full satisfaction in the Promised Land (Deut 8:10). The verb ἐχορτάσθησαν means to be satisfied or eat one’s fill. It suggests that there was an abundance of food that allowed the people to eat till their full satisfaction (Exod 16:16-18; Pss 22:26; 37:19; 78:29; 132:15; Joel 2:26).

In summary, the crowd sits down on the green pasture in groups of hundreds and fifties under Jesus’ command. “The green grass” may allude to the land of rest for the people of God in the eschaton while “the groups of hundreds and fifties” evoke the image of camp arrangements in the Exodus. Since the actions of Jesus in v. 41 are very similar to those of the Last Supper, Mark’s first feeding story not only anticipates the Last Supper but also calls the audience’s attention to the eschatological banquet in the future.

D. Conclusion: 6:43-44

The feeding is now finished. The food was not only satisfying to all participants, but there was more left over at the end than there had been at the beginning—twelve baskets (v. 43). The word κοφίνων (“basket”) is a loanword from Latin (*cophinus*). It is

¹⁶³ Marcus, *Mark* 1–8, 410.

¹⁶⁴ Stein, *Mark*, 317.

“a large, heavy basket, probably various sizes, for carrying things” and is regarded as a typical utensil of the Jews by the Roman satirist Juvenal.¹⁶⁵ That there are leftovers to be picked up seems to be extraordinary compared with the feeding of manna in the Exodus. Hooker suggests that “Mark is hinting at a contrast with the manna provided in the wilderness which could not be preserved, except on the eve of the sabbath. If food is left over, it will perhaps be available for others, who were not present with God’s people in the wilderness.”¹⁶⁶ Boring believes that “so much food was not only left over, but *left behind* is another indication of eschatological extravagance.”¹⁶⁷

The number twelve in v. 43 may appear to be convenient because of the twelve disciples.¹⁶⁸ But given the significance of the number “twelve” in the OT and the NT, I do not think that Mark merely used this number arbitrarily here. In the OT, the number “twelve” is a dominant reference to the twelve sons of Jacob (Gen 35:22) and therefore the twelve tribes of Israel (Gen 49:28). In the NT, the number “twelve” continues to be significant: twelve tribes of Israel (Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30; Acts 26:7; Jas 1:1; Rev 21:12); twelve apostles (Matt 10:1, 2, 5; 11:1; Mark 3:14; 6:7; Luke 6:13), and twelve gates guarded by twelve angels (Rev 21:12-14). “Twelve, then, was a number symbolizing the longed-for fulfillment of Israel’s destiny in the end-time (cf. Sir 36:11;

¹⁶⁵ BDAG, s.v.; Juvenal, *Satires* 3.14; 6.542.

¹⁶⁶ Hooker, *St. Mark*, 167.

¹⁶⁷ Boring, *Mark*, 187.

¹⁶⁸ Stein (*Mark*, 317) argues that “the ‘twelve’ baskets do not have any direct, symbolic value. They simply indicate that after their distribution, the twelve disciples collected twelve ‘baskets’ of leftovers. Whatever symbolism there may be in the number twelve comes from Jesus having chosen twelve disciples (3:14), not to there being twelve baskets.”

Ezek 45:8; *Pss. Sol.* 17:26-28; Matt 19:28), and it is no accident that the eschatologically oriented Qumran community was ruled by a council of this number (see 1QS 8:1).”¹⁶⁹

Thus, the number twelve is not just a random number, it is a theologically nuanced symbol which signifies the completeness and perfection of the kingdom of God in the messianic age.

Mark finally tells his audience that the number of people who ate the loaves was five thousand men (v. 44)—a number that could easily have been calculated because of the divisions of the crowd into groups of hundreds and fifties. The use of ἄνδρες (“men”), rather than the word ἄνθρωποι, the generic sense of “human beings,” is somewhat strange because the crowds that follow Jesus are probably composed of men, women, and children. Mark probably inherits his usage from the census of the OT which only counts families by the heads of households (Num 1:2-4).

The feeding story ends without the expected acclamation—reactions of wonder or amazement by the crowd as in previous miracle stories (cf. 1:27; 2:12; 4:41; 5:20, 42; 7:37). The reason for this is probably because the crowd did not know that the feeding was miraculous. Hooker maintains that

Mark perhaps supposes that the crowd were unaware of what had happened, and that the disciples alone realized that five thousand people had been fed on five loaves. Certainly he emphasizes later that, even though the disciples had witnessed the miracle, they did not understand its significance and were therefore in the same condition as the crowd (6:52; 8:17-21).¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 267.

¹⁷⁰ Hooker, *St Mark*, 168.

Indeed, for Mark, the story of the first feeding is over, but the story of the lack of understanding of the disciples continues (6:52), it really does not end until Mark 8:29.

In summary, at the end of Mark's first feeding story, not only the crowd of five thousand ate and were satisfied but there were leftovers to fill up twelve baskets. The emphasis on the uneaten bread and fish indicates the eschatological superabundance of food in the coming kingdom of God.

IV. Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that form critically Mark 6:30-34 and 6:35-44 belong to two separate traditions: one is the sending of the Twelve and the other is the miraculous feeding. Mark has put these two units together for his own theological purposes. First, Mark's long introduction (vv. 30-34) to the feeding story (vv. 35-44) indicates his intent—he wants to portray Jesus as a good shepherd who cares for his sheep by teaching and feeding them. Evoking the miraculous feeding of the OT Exodus in the wilderness (vv. 31, 32, 35), Jesus had compassion on the crowd because they were like sheep without a shepherd, so he taught them many things (v. 34). By alluding to Jesus as the shepherd, Mark also emphasizes that the teaching of Jesus is as important as the feeding. Mark demonstrates to his audience that as a good shepherd Jesus is perfectly able to provide for the crowd spiritually (teaching) and physically (feeding).

Second, Mark wants to show the lack of faith and misunderstanding of the disciples through this feeding story. The theme of incomprehension of the disciples has dominated the first half of the gospel. Jesus has shown his authority on many occasions,

which should have led to the recognition by the disciples that he is the Messiah. But the disciples were blind to these signs. Only the demons recognize his more profound identity (1:23-24, 34; 3:11-12; 5:6-8). By setting forth the disciples' blindness, Mark invites his audience to see.

Finally, I have suggested that this feeding narrative foreshadows the Last Supper (14: 22). It is argued that the terminology of these two events is very similar. The overtones of the Eucharist are quite clear: "taking . . . , looking up . . . , he said the blessings, broke . . . , and gave . . ." (v. 41). The similarities between these two events outweigh their differences. Mark's first feeding story seems to be an anticipation of the Last Supper. I also proposed that Mark's emphasis on the abundance of food provided by Jesus in the story evokes the imagery of an eschatological banquet. Therefore, the feeding of the five thousand not only anticipates the celebration of the Last Supper but also looks forward to the messianic banquet at the eschaton.

In summary, in this chapter I have analyzed the Greek text of Mark 6:30-44 using the redaction-critical method. In so doing, I have argued that the purpose of Mark's redaction is theological. In this feeding narrative, Mark portrays Jesus as a good and compassionate shepherd who cares for his sheep by teaching and feeding them. He is also critical of the blindness of the disciples for their ignorance about the true identity of Jesus. Finally, I have argued that this feeding story foreshadows Jesus' final meal with the disciples on the night before his death because of their similar terminology.

In order to understand Mark's first feeding story better, it is important to see it in its cultural and historical context. It is also imperative to examine this feeding story from

an intertextual standpoint by comparing it with a similar OT story. In the next chapter, I will first provide an overview of the historical and cultural background to this feeding narrative. Then I will discuss the OT allusions in this feeding story from a narrative standpoint that includes its relationship to the rest of the Markan gospel. And finally, I will discuss the literary genre of this feeding story by comparing it to the feeding story in 2 Kgs 4:42-44.

Chapter Three

Intertextuality and Mark 6:30-44

I. Introduction

In the preceding chapter I analyzed Mark 6:30-44 by using the historical-critical methods of textual and redactional criticisms. The findings from that chapter constitute a multifaceted platform upon which I will now examine the text of Mark's first feeding story in narrative-critical detail. The purpose of the present chapter is to explore the rich OT references in the Markan text from an intertextual point of view—to read it within the context of the OT. It is assumed that the author of Mark and his audience share the same literary (i.e., the OT) and cultural background (i.e., first century Judaism, Greco-Roman literature/culture, and an apocalyptic-eschatological worldview).¹⁷¹ For example, it is assumed that Mark and his audience were familiar with the Exodus tradition, the Deuteronomistic History, and the oracles of the exilic prophet Ezekiel. It is based on this knowledge of the Exodus event (e.g., the crossing of the Reed Sea, the wilderness, and the feeding with manna, etc.), the prophecy of Ezekiel, and the miracle stories of the Elijah-Elisha narrative cycle that the audience would recall and therefore make sense of what theological and Christological statements Mark is trying to make in the present feeding narrative.

Although Mark's first feeding narrative is dense with OT references, the story itself is not difficult to understand. The traditions behind the Markan text, however, are rich and complicated. Mark's allusions in the story are primarily linked to the Exodus

¹⁷¹ Heil, *The Gospel of Mark as Model for Action*, 3-18.

tradition and Ezekiel 34 while the structure of the narrative is most similar to the Elisha feeding story. For these reasons, it is imperative to read this feeding story in a broader literary context with regards to its intertextual relationships. Intertextuality usually concerns relationship between two texts, especially the literary dependence of the later text on the earlier one.¹⁷² It is argued that

Texts, whether they be literary or non-literary, are viewed by modern theorists as lacking in any kind of independent meaning. They are what theorists now call intertextual. The act of reading, theorists claim, plunges us into a network of textual relations. To interpret a text, to discover its meaning, or meanings, is to trace those relations. Reading thus becomes a process of moving between texts. Meaning becomes something which exists between a text and all the other texts to which it refers and relates, moving out from the independent text into a network of textual relations. The text becomes the intertext.¹⁷³

While this statement represents a typical secular literary approach to a given text, intertextuality does encourage the readers to go further and find richer meaning in relation to other texts. In biblical studies, a modified approach of intertextuality is not only sensible but also beneficial since there are many intertexts within both the OT and NT.¹⁷⁴ In this study, “intertextuality refers to the ways a new text is created from the metaphors, images, and symbols of an earlier text or tradition. The interaction between a received text and a fresh social context brings a new textual and symbolic world into

¹⁷² Some would define “intertextuality” broadly to include music scores, paintings, and other artifacts.

¹⁷³ Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London & New York: Routledge, 2000) 1.

¹⁷⁴ In the present study, the scope of “intertextuality” is limited primarily to the relationship between the text of Mark and the texts of the OT. For a discussion on intertextuality, see Thaïs E. Morgan, “Is There an Intertext in This Text?: Literary and Interdisciplinary Approaches to Intertextuality,” *American Journal of Semiotics* 3 (1985) 1-40 and Allen, *Intertextuality*; for its application in biblical studies, see Patricia Tull, “Intertextuality and the Hebrew Scriptures,” *CR:BS* 8 (2000) 59-90 and Thomas R. Hatina, “Intertextuality and Historical Criticism in New Testament Studies: Is There a Relationship?” *Biblical Interpretation* 7 (1999) 28-43.

being. Intertextuality provides the hermeneutical lens through which to read the newly created work.”¹⁷⁵

In this chapter I will first provide an intertextual analysis of Mark’s first feeding story against its cultural context by focusing on three OT allusions.¹⁷⁶ In reading Mark intertextually, I will also take into consideration extrabiblical sources such as the Dead Sea Scrolls.¹⁷⁷ Then I will examine the parallel between OT miracle stories and Mark’s first feeding narrative by comparing Mark’s feeding story with that of 2 Kgs 4:42-44. And finally, I will conclude this chapter with a summary of the significance of the OT allusions in this feeding story as a result of this intertextual reading.

II. Mark 6:30-44 in the Context of the OT

A. Definition of an Allusion

Mark’s OT allusions in his first feeding story (vv. 31, 32, 34, 35 and 40) suggest that the predominant literary and cultural context is the Exodus tradition. This is not surprising because the Exodus event has a dominant presence in the OT, the Scriptures for the early church and its members.¹⁷⁸ Furthermore, Mark 6:34 is also possibly influenced by the prophecies and imageries of Ezekiel 34. But why does Mark allude to

¹⁷⁵ Gail R. O’Day, “Jeremiah 9:22-23 and 1 Corinthians 1:26-31: A Study in Intertextuality,” *JBL* 109 (1990) 259.

¹⁷⁶ With regard to the OT allusions in Mark’s first feeding narrative, I am dealing primarily with the LXX.

¹⁷⁷ The Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) are generally dated by scholars somewhere from 200 B.C.E. to 70 C.E. They provide a wide-ranging cultural and literal context for understanding the NT in general and Mark’s first feeding story in particular.

¹⁷⁸ Piper (“Unchanging Promise,” 17) argues that the conspicuous place of the wilderness in Mark (1:4, 12, 13, 35, and 45) indicates that he has modeled his gospel after the Exodus event.

the OT at all since he is writing a gospel about Jesus? What is Mark's intention? One of the reasons for Mark's allusions is to conjure up OT authority to support his claim that Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah. The other possible reason could be that by using familiar imageries from the OT Mark will make his Jesus story more accessible to his audience.

But would Mark's audience detect his allusions and understand them? To answer this question, it would be helpful to define an allusion. According to M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey G. Harpham, an "allusion is a passing reference, without explicit identification, to a literary or historical person, place, or event, or to another literary work or passage. . . . Since allusions are not explicitly identified, they imply a fund of knowledge that is shared by an author and the audience for whom the author writes."¹⁷⁹ Since an allusion is only an inexplicit reference, it could reflect on the language, vocabulary, and literary style of a previous work when the author composes his or her own writings. Furthermore, if an allusion is to be successful, the author and the audience must have a shared cultural experience. Since the Scriptures of Mark and his audience were most likely the OT, they would probably have heard those stories of "the signs and wonders" (Exodus 7-12), "the crossing of the Reed Sea" (Exodus 14), "the feeding with manna" (Exodus 16), and the prophecy about David in Ezekiel 34. Therefore, the members of the early church would have had a pre-understanding of the themes and

¹⁷⁹ M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (9th ed.; Boston: Wadsworth, 2009) 11-12.

figures of the Exodus and Ezekiel: Moses/Joshua, David, the signs and wonders, the wilderness, and orderly groups in thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens.

While Abrams and Harpham's definition is to the point, it takes neither the author nor the audience into consideration. William Irwin defines an allusion as "a reference that is indirect in the sense that it calls for associations that go beyond mere substitution of a referent. An author must intend this indirect reference, and it must be in principle possible that the intended audience could detect it."¹⁸⁰ He argues that the indirectness of the reference is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for allusion. An allusion must include the authorial intent (a necessary condition) and the possibility of detection in principle by the audience. According to Irwin, if the reader's understanding of an allusion is to be genuine, it must be in accord with the author's intent. Otherwise, "the reader is not understanding the allusion but creating something else."¹⁸¹ Based on Irwin's definition, I will argue not only that Mark's allusions are intentional but also that the audience will most likely be able to detect and understand them since both the author of Mark and his audience shared a similar literary and cultural background. In reading Mark 6:30-44 intertextually, I will first examine phrases that Mark uses to allude to the OT; second, I will explore how Mark gives new meanings to these OT allusions.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ William Irwin, "What Is an Allusion?" *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 59 (2001) 293.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² It is difficult to distinguish between "an allusion" and "an echo" in terms of intertextual readings. Some confuse these two terms and use them interchangeably. In his first feeding narrative, Mark makes several references to the OT. Are they intertextual allusions or intertextual echoes? Based on Irwin's definition, I would suggest that an allusion is more author-oriented, i.e., it is intended by the author. On the other hand, an echo seems to be more audience-oriented, i.e., it lies in the eye of the beholder and it is a hermeneutical issue. For example, the motif of rest (v. 31; cf. Deut 12:9 and Jer 31:2) and the green

B. Criteria for Determining Allusions

Richard B. Hays suggests that there is a spectrum of intertextual reference. At one end of the spectrum is the direct quotation and the intertextual relationship is obvious. At the other end is the echo where the trace to the original source has faded away and the intertextual connections become harder to identify. And somewhere in between the quotation and the echo is the allusion where the relationship with the precursor text is to a certain extent easier to identify than the echo.¹⁸³ Because of the fluidity of determining intertextual relations between texts, scholars have proposed criteria for detecting allusions. For example, in his study of Isaiah's new exodus theme in Mark, Watts suggests the following criteria for detecting scriptural allusions. For him, an allusion is considered more likely when

1. Linguistic parallels and conceptual congruence are marked.
2. Either the linguistic or conceptual parallels or both tend toward being unique to the proposed OT passage.
3. Themes evoked by the allusion not only cohere with but also clarify the meaning of the Markan passage under consideration.
4. The explanatory function of the allusion displays a high degree of congruence with broader Markan themes (this assumes a certain degree of thematic coherence in Mark's presentation of Jesus).
5. There is a similar application of the OT source passage elsewhere.¹⁸⁴

Following Richard Hays and Dale Allison's lead, Ulrich Luz formulates the following criteria for identifying biblical allusions:

grass (v. 39; cf. Isa 35:1-2) would be echoes since they are subjected to the audience's interpretation. For a study of intertextual echoes, see Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989) 1-33.

¹⁸³ Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 23.

¹⁸⁴ Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark*, 8.

1. A Gospel text and its presumed biblical intertext must share more than one of the following elements: specific lexical items, word order, syntax, themes, images, or structure.
2. The biblical intertext should have been recognized as such by earlier readers; that is, it should have a pedigree in the history of interpretation.
3. The probability of allusion is higher if the presumed biblical intertext is used elsewhere by the author, or if it is taken from a biblical book that is often quoted by the author.
4. The probability of allusion is higher if the presumed biblical allusion is in harmony with a coherent interpretation of the whole text in which it appears.¹⁸⁵

Recognizing the acute problem of judging dependence in biblical studies, Thomas

L. Brodie proposes the following positive criteria:

1. External Plausibility (Context): dependence can be invoked only if external factors make such dependence plausible.
2. Significant Similarities, including (1) similarity of theme; (2) pivotal leads or clues; (3) action/plot; (4) completeness; (5) order; (6) linguistic details; (7) complex coherence.
3. The Intelligibility of the Differences: the differences, no matter how great, do not decide the issue of literary dependence because these differences may be caused by creative reinterpretation.¹⁸⁶

A common feature shared by these criteria is the linguistic parallel between texts.

Watts emphasizes that linguistic parallels/the conceptual parallels should be unique to the proposed OT passage. For Luz, it is important that a biblical allusion should be recognizable by gospel readers. Brodie points out the importance of similar plot as a criterion of literary dependence. These proposed criteria are helpful to the understanding of the complexity of intertextuality, some of which will be discussed in the following section.

¹⁸⁵ Ulrich Luz, "Intertexts in the Gospel of Matthew," *HTR* 97 (2004) 130-31.

¹⁸⁶ Thomas L. Brodie, *The Birthing of the New Testament: The Intertextual Development of the New Testament Writings* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2004) 44-46. He also lists a number of what he calls "principles that can mislead" in assessing literary dependence (*ibid.*, 47-49).

C. Mark's OT Allusions

1. "A Wilderness Place" (Mark 6:31, 32, 35)

Mark 6:31: καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· δεῦτε ὑμεῖς αὐτοὶ κατ' ἰδίαν εἰς ἔρημον τόπον.
And he said to them, "Come by yourselves alone to a wilderness place. . .

Mark 6:32: Καὶ ἀπῆλθον ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ εἰς ἔρημον τόπον κατ' ἰδίαν.
So they went in the boat to a wilderness place alone by themselves.

Mark 6:35: προσελθόντες αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ἔλεγον ὅτι ἔρημός ἐστιν ὁ τόπος καὶ ἤδη ὥρα πολλή.
His disciples came to him and said, "This is a wilderness place and it is already late."

Exod 16:1: καὶ ἦλθσαν πᾶσα συναγωγὴ υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ εἰς τὴν ἔρημον Σιν.
And the whole congregation of the sons of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin.

Exod 16:3: ὅτι ἐξηγάγετε ἡμᾶς εἰς τὴν ἔρημον ταύτην.
That you have led us to this wilderness place.

Exod 16:10: καὶ ἐπεστράφησαν εἰς τὴν ἔρημον.
And they turned toward the wilderness.

The Gospel of Mark begins in the wilderness. Although it is well known that

Mark 1:2b-3 is a quotation combining Exod 23:20, Mal 3:1, and Isa 40:3, the combination could well be intended by Mark literarily and theologically since these OT passages share two common and interrelated themes: "the way" and "the wilderness."¹⁸⁷ Even though Mark ascribes the "quotation" to the prophet Isaiah, the connection with the Exodus event is apparent because "the highway in the wilderness" in Isa 40:3b clearly alludes to the Exodus.¹⁸⁸ In the Exodus from Egypt, the Israelites took a detour to the

¹⁸⁷ Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 15-17.

¹⁸⁸ I believe the impetus behind the wilderness theme in Mark 1:2b-3 is not Isa 40:3 but the wandering of the Israelites in the wilderness in the original Exodus because later the desert motif appears

wilderness before entering Canaan. But for Isaiah, the new exodus will be different and no more wanderings in the wilderness because “the way” will be made straight. “The way” of Exod 23:20 (Mal 3:1) is reinterpreted by Mark as “the way of the Lord” (Isa 40:3), a common theme of Deutero-Isaiah (42:16; 43:16, 19; 48:17; 49:11; 51:10) for the path by which Yhwh will bring back his people from the Babylonian exile. By combining Exod 23:20/Mal 3:1 and Isa 40:3, Mark clearly identifies that the good news of Jesus is a continuation of the Deutero-Isaiah exodus which started from the original Exodus via the wilderness. It is against this background that the Markan wilderness theme sets forth the stage for the new and final exodus.

The theme of wilderness is prominent in the first chapter of Mark. It is in the wilderness where John the Baptist and Jesus are introduced and meet each other.¹⁸⁹ The wilderness then becomes the setting for John’s ministry of baptizing and preaching (1:3-4), and for Jesus’ baptism (1:9), testing (1:12-13), and other early ministries (1:35, 45). It is in the wilderness where a new exodus is called to start. Ernest Best argues that τὴν ὁδόν (“the way”) in Mark 1:2-3 (Exod 23:20; Mal 3:1; Isa 40:3) is also programmatic to “the way section” in Mark 8:27-10:45 because it is in the wilderness that “Jesus is about

again in the temptation of Jesus in the desert for forty days (1:12-13; cf. Exod 28:18; 34:28; Deut 8:2). While Marcus (*The Way of the Lord*, 23-26) is right to point out the eschatological nature of Mark’s “quotation,” he overemphasizes the influence of Deutero-Isaiah on Mark (1:2b-3) and neglects that the threshold of Mark’s wilderness allusion is related to the Exodus in terms of “deliverance and conquest” of the Israelites under the leadership of Moses and Joshua.

¹⁸⁹ Marcus (*The Way of the Lord*, 29) argues that “their appearance on the scene fulfills the prophecies of old because it heralds eschatological events, because it is the preparation for and the beginning of the fulfillment of that end so eagerly yearned for since Old Testament times: the triumphant march of the holy warrior, Yahweh, leading his people through the wilderness to their true homeland in a mighty demonstration of saving power.”

to begin to go ‘on the way’ which is prepared by John the Baptizer and which ends in Jerusalem. His disciples are to follow him on this ‘way.’”¹⁹⁰

Mark picks up the wilderness theme again in his first feeding narrative. By depicting a feeding story in the wilderness setting, Mark evokes for his audience an important episode of the Israelites’ life during their sojourn in the wilderness. For the people of Israel, the wilderness symbolized some extraordinary experiences with Yhwh, recalling the forty years’ wandering in the wilderness before entering the Promised Land, culminating with the covenant with Yhwh at Mount Sinai (Exodus 16-24).

After the crossing of the Reed Sea, the Israelites started their wandering in the wilderness (Exod 15:22). In Exodus 16, while the people of Israel were in the wilderness of Sin (τὴν ἔρημον Σιν), they complained to Moses and Aaron that they were dying of hunger (16:1-3). In response, Yhwh said to Moses: “Behold, I will rain down bread for you from heaven” (16:4). As promised, Yhwh provided bread for the Israelites (16:13-16) and the people ate as much as they wanted (16:17). The Israelites ate the bread that Yhwh provided for them forty years until they settled in Canaan (16:36). But there was also a darker side to their wilderness experience as they doubted whether or not Yhwh would provide their daily bread—they tried to hide and hoard the bread only to have it breed worms and become foul (16:20). Furthermore, they even succumbed to temptation and rebelled against Yhwh and built themselves a golden calf (32:1–33:6). In Deutero-Isaiah, the wilderness becomes the place where Yhwh would again deliver his people by

¹⁹⁰ Best, *Following Jesus*, 15-16.

bringing them back from the exile and the place where a new exodus would begin (Isaiah 40-55).

The Dead Sea Scrolls indicate that the members of the Qumran Community understood the significance of the wilderness because they also appealed to Isa 40:3 and organized a community of covenant renewal in the wilderness (1QS 8:12-16; cf. 9:19-20):

And when these become members of the Community in Israel according to all these rules, they shall separate from the habitation of unjust men and shall go into the wilderness to prepare there the way of Him; as it is written, *Prepare in the wilderness the way of . . . , make straight in the desert a path for our God* (Isa. xl, 3). This (path) is the study of the Law which He commanded by the hand of Moses, that they may do according to all that has been revealed from age to age, and as the Prophets have revealed by His Holy Spirit.¹⁹¹

The members of Qumran Community saw the religious importance of the wilderness for the Israelites in the history under the leadership of Moses. For them, it was apparent that the wilderness had been a place of testing and purification, a place where God revealed himself to his people. Therefore, the wilderness became a final place for them to meet a last time and wait for God to reveal himself and act in history.¹⁹²

The first-century Jewish revolutionaries of the Great Revolt (66–70 C.E.) against the Romans also realized the significance of the wilderness in relation to the Exodus and the Messiah. “Since the Messiah was believed to arise in the wilderness and gather the

¹⁹¹ Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (rev. ed.; London: Penguin, 2004) 109.

¹⁹² Cross (*The Ancient Library of Qumran*, 68-70) writes that “the community isolates itself to achieve a form of perfection and shuns contact with temptation, living in rigorous simplicity. . . . They go into the desert for a season, to be born again as the New Israel, to enter into the New Covenant of the last day. They await in the desert the Second Exodus (or Conquest), ‘preparing the way of the Lord,’ disciplining themselves by the rule of the ancient Wars of Yahweh to be ready to fight the final war of God.”

people there, the Judean desert was repeatedly the scene where Messianic movements were gathering, although the various movements apparently had different political colors.”¹⁹³ The first-century Jewish historian Josephus, Mark’s contemporary, reports several of them for whom the wilderness was of theological importance.¹⁹⁴ For example, Josephus tells us about a magician named Theudas who persuaded a large group of people to follow him to the Jordan River. He told his followers that he was a prophet and that he would divide the river by his own command, allowing them to cross it with ease. But the procurator of Judea at the time, Fadus, sent his troops and attacked the people, killing many of them and taking Theudas alive.¹⁹⁵

Intertextually, there are spatial and linguistic parallels between the wilderness setting of the Exodus and that of Mark’s first feeding story. As the Exodus story took place in the wilderness (τὴν ἔρημον, Exod 16:1, 3, 10; cf. 16:14), Mark’s story took place in the wilderness place (ἐρημον τόπον, Mark 6:32-35). While the bread (ἄρτους, Exod 16:3, 4, 8, 29; ἄρτων, 16:12; ἄρτος, 16:15) was provided during the Exodus, so was the bread (ἄρτους, Mark 6:37, 38, 41, 44) served in Mark’s story. Judging from the

¹⁹³ Mauser, *Christ in the Wilderness*, 56.

¹⁹⁴ Born in 37 C.E. only a few years after Jesus’ death, Josephus’ works provide some of the earliest history about Jesus outside the gospels. Steve Mason (*Josephus and the New Testament* [2nd ed.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003] 298) argues that “virtually every line of Josephus’ copious work is relevant in some way or other to NT interpretation.” Besides providing a general cultural and historical context for understanding the NT, there are a number of persons and groups in his writings that overlap with the gospels and should be familiar to Mark’s audience. For example, he discusses John the Baptist, James the brother of Jesus, Pontius Pilate, the Sadducees, the Sanhedrin, the High Priests, and the Pharisees, etc. Therefore, Josephus’ works are one of the most important extrabiblical sources for studying the NT. For the significance of Josephus for NT study, see Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament*, 213-96.

¹⁹⁵ Josephus, *A.J.* 20.5.1 §97-99. Cf. also certain “impostors and deceivers” (*A.J.* 20.8.6 §167-68), an Egyptian prophet (20.8.6 §169-72; *B.J.* 2.13.5 §261-63), an unnamed “impostor” (*A.J.* 20.8.10 §188), and Jonathan the Weaver (*B.J.* 7.11.1 §438).

prominent presence of the wilderness theme in the first half of the gospel (1:3, 4, 12, 13, 35, 45; 6:31, 32, 35; 8:4), Mark understands the theological significance of the wilderness and is aware of “the belief that the last and decisive age of salvation will begin in the ἔρημος, and that here the Messiah will appear.”¹⁹⁶ Although Mark alludes to the Exodus tradition, the meaning of the wilderness is fundamentally different in each story: the wilderness in Exodus 16 was a place of complaint, moaning, and sometimes disobedience; but the Markan wilderness was a place of grace and hope—where the crowd had a foretaste of the kingdom of God. In Exodus 16, the Israelites were wandering passively at the wilderness of Sin depending upon Yhwh’s provision. In the Markan first feeding narrative, the crowd actively followed Jesus to the wilderness place—their hunger was satisfied spiritually (6:34) and physically (6:42). For Mark, the fact that the feeding of the crowd happened in the wilderness is not a simple repetition of the exodus story, but an integral part of the new exodus with Jesus as its leader.

2. “Like Sheep without a Shepherd” (6:34)

Mark’s comment that the crowd “were like sheep without a shepherd” (6:34) may be called as an “allusive quotation” which “reflects the language and phrase-forms with which the writer is most familiar and in which he habitually thinks.”¹⁹⁷ It contains the

¹⁹⁶ Gerhard Kittel, “ἔρημος,” *TDNT*, 2. 658.

¹⁹⁷ Robert H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew’s Gospel: With Special Reference to the Messianic Hope* (NovTSup 18; Leiden: Brill, 1967) 3. He writes about “the neglect in previous studies of the *allusive* quotations and their text-form” (*ibid.*, 2-3). According to him, this neglect of the study of text-form and allusive quotations is due to two reasons. First, “it is felt that allusive quotations can have been made only from memory, so that textual variants cannot be considered significant.” Second, “it is felt that allusions are not based on any attempt to cite the Old Testament accurately; i.e., the very allusiveness in the high-flown language of apocalyptic.” He adds that “recent

clearest allusion to the OT (Num 27:17 and Ezek 34:5) in Mark's first feeding story.¹⁹⁸

With this allusion to the OT imagery, Mark's intention is clear: he wants his audience to think of Jesus in terms of Moses and David, the heroes of Israel past, both of whom were shepherds (Exod 3:1 and 1 Sam 16:11 respectively).

a. Num 27:17

Mark 6:34: ὅτι ἦσαν ὡς πρόβατα μὴ ἔχοντα ποιμένα.
For they were like sheep not having a shepherd.

Num 27:17: καὶ οὐκ ἔσται ἡ συναγωγή κυρίου ὥσπερ πρόβατα οἷς οὐκ ἔστιν ποιμήν.
So that the congregation of the Lord will not be like sheep for whom there is not a shepherd.

Near the end of the Exodus event while still in the wilderness (ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, Num 27:3, 14), the Israelites were ready to conquer Canaan. But Moses could not continue to lead them into the Promised Land because of sin (20:12). As a result, he asked Yhwh (27:17) to appoint a new leader in his place so that “the congregation of the Lord may not be like sheep without a shepherd.” In the OT shepherds may be literal or metaphorical: literally, there were those who were in charge of sheep as a means of living; and metaphorically, there were those religious or political leaders who were in charge of people. Moses was a shepherd in both senses. Since Moses was a shepherd himself (Exod 3:1), it was natural for him to use the sheep-shepherd metaphor to make the

researches in the Qumran scrolls have shown that in the New Testament period the interweaving of scriptural phraseology and one's own words was a conscious literary method.”

¹⁹⁸ Besides Num 27:17 and Ezek 34:5, Mark 6:34 also echoes a number of OT texts: 1 Kgs 22:17/2 Chr 18:16; Zech 10:2; Jdt 11:19. Although the shepherd image in 6:34 also alludes to David in Ezekiel 34 (v. 23), Irwin (“What Is an Allusion?” 294-96) would call this intertextual connection between Jesus and David an “accidental association.”

request for his replacement. Therefore, at the crucial junction of the Israelites' history, Moses, like a good shepherd, was concerned about his sheep so that they would not go into Canaan without a leader. In the end, Yhwh appointed Joshua (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ/Ἰησοῦς; 27:18) to replace Moses and lead the Israelites out of the wilderness into Canaan.

From an intertextual point of view, the shepherd image in Mark's first feeding narrative alludes naturally to the request of a new leader by Moses in the wilderness because the sentiment that the Markan Jesus demonstrates in Mark 6:34 is quite in consonance with Moses' concern there. Jesus looked at the crowd and had compassion for them because they resembled a flock with no shepherd to lead it. The situation between Mark 6:34 and Num 27:17 is also very similar: just as Yhwh appoints a new leader, Joshua, who will lead the flock of Israel to continue their journey of conquest, so also the crowd in Mark has their shepherd, Jesus, to lead them on the way in the new exodus. Jesus is portrayed here as the God-appointed shepherd who leads the crowd (the new Israel) by teaching and feeding them.

It is now clear that Mark's shepherd allusion in this feeding narrative is to associate Jesus with Moses. But the author of Mark wants his audience to take it further and "go beyond mere substitution of a referent" of the allusion and explore an embedded aspect of this typology, that is, to think of Jesus as the prophet like Moses.¹⁹⁹ Irwin argues that in order for an allusion to be successful (i.e., to be understood), "the reader

¹⁹⁹ Irwin, "What Is an Allusion?" 293.

must call to mind something not explicitly in the text.”²⁰⁰ In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses told the Israelites that Yhwh will raise up for them “a prophet like me” from among their own people (Deut 18:15, 18; cf. 34:10). While Mark does not explicitly proclaim that Jesus is a prophet (6:4, 15; 8:28) or “the prophet like Moses” in his gospel, his portrayal of Jesus is consistent with the early church’s understanding and kerygma that Jesus is the prophet like Moses whom Yhwh has raised up (Acts 3:22, 23; 7:37). From Mark’s narration up to this point, the audience can at least draw two aspects from Jesus being “the prophet like Moses.” First, like Moses, Jesus is a miracle worker. Like Moses in the Exodus (Exod 4:17-21; 7:14-19; 15:22-25), the Markan Jesus performed a series of signs and wonders in the first half of the gospel (1:21-34, 40-45; 2:1-12; 4:34-41; 5:1-43; 6:30-44, 45-52; 7:24-37; 8:1-10). These actions show that Mark wants his audience to think that Jesus is *Moses redivivus*.²⁰¹ Through these mighty deeds, Mark establishes Jesus as the anticipated Mosaic Messiah who performs signs and wonders with divine authority (cf. Acts 2:22). Just as Yhwh gave Moses power to perform signs and wonders to authenticate his message, so also Jesus performed signs and wonders according to the power received from God. Jesus’ actions not only evoked the Exodus tradition but also signified the arrival of the eschatological age. By performing signs and wonders reminiscent of Israel’s wanderings in the wilderness, the Markan Jesus thus signals that he has come to fulfill the eschatological hope of God’s people.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Given the background of the Elijah-Elisha narrative cycle to the Markan first feeding narrative, the author of Mark may also have an *Elisha redivivus* in mind as well; see the discussion in section III.

Second, Jesus is a teacher like Moses.²⁰² During the Exodus, Moses not only performed mighty deeds, he also taught the Israelites to live in accordance with Yhwh's commands (Deut 4:5; 31:19, 22). In the Gospel of Mark, not only the signs of Jesus are consistent with the portrayal of Jesus as the prophet like Moses, but also his teachings. From the very beginning, the Markan Jesus taught people as the one having authority (Mark 1:22). He taught the crowd many things in parables (4:2). Like Moses, Jesus gave "the law" once again as he proclaimed the kingdom of God, the new teaching with authority (1:15, cf. 1:27). Walter Riggans draws parallels between Jesus' statements in Mark's gospel and the passages in the OT concerning the prophetic office held by Moses and the prophet like Moses. Commenting on Jesus' healing a paralyzed man and forgiving his sins in Mark 2:1-12, he writes:

To declare, as Jesus did, that someone's sins are forgiven is to speak a prophetic word (see 2 Sam 12:13b), just as healing someone is prophetic activity. These Torah experts have come to observe Jesus' power and, more importantly, to test the source of whatever power he may have (cf. Matt 12:22-37, where some experts ascribe his power to Beelzebub). Jesus takes them to a biblical context which was probably in their minds anyway, namely Deut 18:14-22.²⁰³

As the Markan narrative unfolds, the audience should be able to detect the third aspect of Jesus being "the prophet like Moses," namely, Jesus is a foreseer of the future like Moses.²⁰⁴ There is a remarkable similarity between the predictions of Moses and those of Jesus. Moses spoke of grave consequences as a result of Israel's disobedience:

²⁰² Walter C. Kaiser, "Christ as Prophet," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (ed. Walter A. Elwell. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996) 640.

²⁰³ Walter Riggans, "Jesus and the Scriptures: Two Short Notes," *Themelios* n.s. 16 (1991) 15.

²⁰⁴ Kaiser, "Christ as Prophet," 640-41.

dispersion, spiritual apostasy, and other terrible calamities (Deut 28:28-64; 29:22-28; 31:20-21). Similarly in Mark 13:1-4, Jesus predicted that the temple would be destroyed because of the apostasy of the people. Predictions about the temple's destruction were of course not original or unique to Jesus; earlier prophets also had the same prophecies as part of their standard litany of how Yhwh would punish a corrupted and disobedient Israel (cf. Mic 3:12). But on the Mount of Olives, the Markan Jesus goes further by predicting and describing calamities such as wars, earthquakes, famines (Mark 13:5-8), and tribulations (13:9-23) leading up to the triumphant return of the Son of Man and vindication of God's elect (13:24-27). Furthermore, Jesus not only made predictions concerning individuals (14:30), but also regarding his own passion (8:31; 9:31; 10:33) and parousia (14:62).

Although Mark's intention is to tie Jesus to Moses and the Exodus, there are some fundamental differences between them. First, Moses did not have the opportunity to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land because of sin. But in Mark's story, Jesus, the sinless new shepherd, will lead the people into the kingdom of God. Thus, Mark shows that Jesus is greater than Moses. Second, while the old Exodus was to break away from the physical bondage of the Egyptians, the new one is to break away from the spiritual bondage of the dominion of the evil one and the sin of worldliness and to conquer death through Jesus' resurrection.

b. Ezek 34:5

Mark 6:34: ὅτι ἦσαν ὡς πρόβατα μὴ ἔχοντα ποιμένα.
For they were like sheep without a shepherd.

Ezek 34:5: καὶ διεσπάρη τὰ πρόβατά μου διὰ τὸ μὴ εἶναι ποιμένας.
And my sheep were scattered because there were no shepherds.

In Ezekiel 34, Yhwh condemned the situation in which the faithless shepherds of Israel failed abysmally to lead the people because they fed themselves and grievously neglected those allotted to their pastoral care (vv. 1-6).²⁰⁵ As a result, Yhwh declared his mercy towards the lost and scattered flock and promises to search and look after them (vv. 11-12). He will return them to their own land and feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the waters, and in all the inhabited parts of the land (vv. 13-14). He will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak and will feed his flock with justice (v. 16). Finally, Yhwh will appoint a faithful shepherd, “my servant David,” to care for his flock (vv. 23-24) and will establish a covenant of peace so that his flock (the people of Israel) may dwell in the wilderness and the forests safely (v. 25).²⁰⁶ Although Ezekiel issues his stern indictments to the unfaithful shepherds, he also speaks of restoration and salvation through Yhwh, the ultimate shepherd. Therefore, the large context of Ezekiel’s message is about the hope of a Davidic shepherd whom Yhwh will appoint to lead the people and bring about the final restoration of the true Israel.

Intertextually, there is an obvious linguistic parallel between Mark 6:34 (πρόβατα/ποιμένα) and Ezek 34:5 (πρόβατα/ποιμένας). But at the same time, “sheep without a shepherd” in Mark’s first feeding narrative is very similar to the leaderless situation in

²⁰⁵ The situation here is more serious than that of Numbers 27 because the Israelites are far from shepherdless in the exodus: they have been led by Moses since leaving Egypt and will be led by Joshua to continue their journey of conquest.

²⁰⁶ In Jer 23:5, David is not only the shepherd appointed by Yhwh, but also declared to be a king who will reign wisely and do what is right and just in the land.

Ezekiel 34—it corresponds well with Mark's portrayal of the religious leaders of Jesus' day. They also are guilty of neglecting the sick and the outcast (Mark 2:1-12; 2:15-17), unwilling to show compassion to the people (2:23-28; 3:1-6), and failing to exercise their duty to shepherd Israel (3:13-19; 6:7-12). But unlike the scattered sheep in Ezekiel 34 which are waiting for a new shepherd, Jesus is leading the shepherdless crowd by teaching and feeding them in Mark's story. By alluding to the Davidic shepherd of Ezekiel 34, Mark not only sees Jesus as the eschatological shepherd but also as the fulfillment of the prophecy of the shepherd-king. There are several similarities between the Davidic shepherd and the Markan Jesus. First, just as Yhwh promised through Ezekiel to feed his flock (Ezek 34:14), so the Markan Jesus teaches and feeds the crowd of five thousand. Second, as the Davidic shepherd was to tend his sheep in Ezekiel 34, so the Markan Jesus tends his flock by healing the sick and reaching out to the marginalized. Third, as the Davidic shepherd of Ezekiel 34 will deliver Israel from being plundered by its enemies (34:22), so the Markan Jesus binds the strong man—Satan, and plunders his household, thereby granting freedom to the prisoners—Israel (Mark 3:23-27). Thus, the Markan Jesus is seen as both the divinely appointed leader in the wilderness who will lead his people into the promised land and God's servant who will shepherd the flock—the people of Israel in the wilderness in security provided by Yhwh. There are of course some important differences between David and Jesus. For example, David sinned heinously several times (2 Samuel 11) whereas Jesus never sinned. The other difference is that David's kingdom was expansive and earthly, Jesus' is over all things and forever. But Mark's point here seems to be that David is a type for Jesus—just as the shepherd

David is called to lead the nation of Israel, so also Jesus comes to lead “sheep without a shepherd” (Mark 6:34). Thus, Mark envisions Jesus as the shepherd-king who will feed and lead the new Israel (cf. Isa 40:11).

Although the Markan Jesus is unique in that he is the Son of God, he certainly is not the only one who led people to the Jordan desert during the disturbing and timorous years of the first-century Palestine. In his *History of the Jewish War*, Josephus wrote:

Deceivers and impostors, under the pretence of divine inspiration fostering revolutionary changes, they persuaded the multitude to act like madmen, and led them out into the desert under the belief that God would there give them the tokens of deliverance.²⁰⁷

Josephus recorded several popular “prophets” who made claims that they would bring about the eschatological victory of Israel. Many were led astray by these false prophets because they promised to perform “marvels and signs.”²⁰⁸ For example, beside Theudas who led his followers to the Jordan River and told them that he was a prophet,²⁰⁹ Josephus also wrote about a person who came out of Egypt to Jerusalem known as “the Egyptian,” who called himself a prophet and told the multitude of people to go with him to the Mount of Olives. He promised them that the wall of Jerusalem would fall down at his command and he would thus secure them an entrance into the city. But when the Roman procurator Felix heard about these things, he sent his soldiers who attacked and killed hundreds of people. Although the Egyptian himself escaped, he never appeared

²⁰⁷ Josephus, *B.J.* 2.13.4 §259; cf. Mark 13:3 and 22.

²⁰⁸ Josephus, *B.J.* 6.5.2 §286-87. Josephus uses the same terminologies to describe those miracles Moses performed in the exodus to authenticate his prophetic identity before the people of Israel (cf. *A.J.* 2.15.4 §326-328).

²⁰⁹ Josephus, *A.J.* 20.5.1 §97-99.

again.²¹⁰ Since the Mount of Olives is associated with the messianic hope and the Messiah is supposed to enter Jerusalem from there, the Egyptian and his group of followers apparently expect to make their messianic entry into the holy city. It is interesting to point out that Josephus never told us if these “prophets” actually did perform “marvels and signs” before they were trounced by the Roman authorities. Still, there are major differences between Jesus and these “prophets.” First, Jesus’ calling to repent and believe the good news was final and absolute because “the time has come and the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:15). Second, he taught a new teaching with divine authority (1:22, 27). And third, he performed mighty works but did not want to be known for doing them (1:34, 44; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26).

3. “In Groups of Hundreds and Fifties” (6:40)

Mark 6:40: καὶ ἀνέπεσαν πρασιαὶ πρασιαὶ κατὰ ἑκατὸν καὶ κατὰ πεντήκοντα.
And they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties.

Exod 18:21: καὶ καταστήσεις αὐτοὺς ἐπ’ αὐτῶν χιλιάρχους καὶ ἑκατοντάρχους καὶ πεντηκοντάρχους καὶ δεκαδάρχους.
And you shall put these in charge over them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens.

The Exodus allusion continues in 6:40 (cf. Exod 18:21, 25; Num 31:14; Deut 1:15). While the Israelites were in the wilderness, there was a chaotic situation in which people waited all day to seek God’s will through Moses and settle their disputes (Exod 18:13-16). Moses realized that he could not handle all disputes among the people. So he took advice from his father-in-law Jethro by delegating authority to capable men and appointing them as officials over groups of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens (18:17-

²¹⁰ Ibid., 20.8.6 §167-70.

26).²¹¹ As part of the Exodus tradition, this organizational structure should have been familiar to the audience of Mark even though he changed numbers to “in groups of hundreds and fifties” (πρασιαὶ πρασιαὶ κατὰ ἑκατὸν καὶ κατὰ πεντήκοντα) in his gospel.

Similar to Moses who exerted control over the chaotic situation by establishing a system of governing in the wilderness, the Markan Jesus commanded (ἐπέταξεν) the leaderless crowd to sit down in groups on the green grass (Mark 6:39). So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties (6:40).²¹² Earlier in 6:34 a shepherdless sheep have met their shepherd. Now the sheep, a disorderly crowd, become orderly groups by the command of their shepherd, Jesus. This instruction shows not only that Jesus has authority over the crowd (1:22) but also that he is the prophet like Moses who cares for his people.

In the Exodus event Moses’ purpose for organizing people in groups of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens is to delegate responsibilities. Mark borrows the idea but alters the arrangement to hundreds and fifties and gives new meanings to the arrangement. In accord with the eschatological overtone of his narrative Mark changed the original arrangement into “sitting down in groups of hundreds and fifties” to signify the orderly gathering of God’s people in the eschaton. As Marcus points out, “When the God of the

²¹¹ Martin Noth (*Exodus* [OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962] 150) argues that this origination does not derive from any judicial ideas but points to a time of organized levy in Israelite history.

²¹² In Luke 9:14b, Jesus directly told his disciples to have the crowd sit down in groups of fifty.

new exodus manifests himself, Mark implies, human disorder is transformed into organic, paradisiacal order.”²¹³

In a similar way, the same tradition also appeared in the Qumran community. Following the Exodus tradition of organizing themselves into groups of one thousand, one hundred, fifty, and ten, the Qumran community idealized itself as an assembly of the true people of God in the desert. This formation appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls repeatedly as it is used by the members of the Qumran community to regulate their sectarian life (1QS 2:21-22; CD 13:1; 1QM 4:1-5). In “the Messianic Rule” (1QSa 1:27-2:1-3; cf. 1:14-15), the group order is adopted in the requirements for the expectation of the Messiah:

All the wi[se men] of the congregation, the learned and the intelligent, men whose way is perfect and men of ability, together with the tribal chiefs and all the Judges and officers, and the chiefs of the Thousands, [Hundreds,] Fifties, and Tens, and the Levites, each man in the [cla]ss of his duty; these are the men of renown, the members of the assembly summoned to the Council of the Community in Israel before the sons of Zadok the Priests.²¹⁴

Furthermore, these regulations are to be observed later at the messianic meal (1QSa 2:11-22):

[This shall be the ass]embly of the men of renown [called] to the meeting of the Council of the Community

When God will have engendered (the Priest-) Messiah, he shall come [at] the head of the whole congregation of Israel with all [his brethren, the sons] of Aaron the Priests, [those called] to the assembly, the men of renown; and they shall sit [before him, each man] in the order of his dignity. And then [the Mess]iah of Israel shall [come], and the chiefs of the [clans of Israel] shall sit before him,

²¹³ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 419.

²¹⁴ Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 161.

[each] in the order of his dignity, according to [his place] in their camps and marches. And before them shall sit all the heads of [family of the congreg]ation, and the wise men of [the holy congregation,] each in the order of his dignity.

And [when] they shall gather for the common [tab]le, to eat and [to drink] new wine, when the common table shall be set for eating and the new wine [poured] for drinking, let no man extend his hand over the first-fruits of bread and wine before the Priest; for [it is he] who shall bless the first-fruits of bread and wine, and shall be the first [to extend] his hand over the bread. Thereafter, the Messiah of Israel shall extend his hand over the bread, [and] all the congregation of the Community [shall utter a] blessing, [each man in the order] of his dignity.

It is according to this statute that they shall proceed at every me[al at which] at least ten men are gathered together.²¹⁵

Intertextually, this Qumran text and the Markan text are similar at least in two ways. One is that both texts share a meal motif that is eschatological in nature. The other is that they both refer back to the same wilderness tradition from the Exodus. Despite these similarities, there are also some major differences between these texts. For example, in the Qumran text there is a clear social stratification of members among those present at the meal as how and when the participants enter and are seated according to their rank. Also, one of the rules in “the Messianic Rule” states explicitly to exclude those who are ritually impure or unclean and who have broken community guidelines (1QSa 2:4-8):

And no man smitten with any human uncleanness shall enter the assembly of God; no man smitten with any of them shall be confirmed in his office in the congregation. No man smitten in his flesh, or paralyzed in his feet or hands, or lame, or blind, or deaf, or dumb, or smitten in his flesh with a visible blemish; no old and tottery man unable to stay still in the midst of the congregation; none of these shall come to hold office among the congregation of the men of renown, for the Angels of Holiness are [with] their [congregation].²¹⁶

²¹⁵ Ibid., 161-62.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 161.

Only the members who are considered as “the men of renown” (אֲשֵׁנֵי הַשֵּׁמָּה) can partake of the messianic meal at the Qumran Community. On the other hand, the Markan Jesus wanted to break down this social stratification. As a matter of fact, Jesus is depicted repeatedly in the Gospel of Mark as inviting and dining with many tax collectors and “sinners” (2:15) and healing the unclean (1:40-42)—those who have no honor or reputation in their society. Therefore, the Markan feeding story is about the inclusion that is God’s salvific plan for those who have faith in Jesus. In spite of these differences it is significant that both the Qumran text and the Markan text refer back to the similar organizing numbers of the Israelites in the Exodus. By embracing the Exodus tradition, the author of 1QSa regards the members of the Qumran community as the true Israel. By alluding to Exod 18:21, the author of Mark identifies the followers of Jesus as the true people of God.

In summary, I have argued that both Mark and his audience share a similar literary and cultural background. The predominant presence of the Exodus tradition and the Davidic shepherd imagery of Ezekiel 34 in Mark’s first feeding story indicates that not only are Mark’s allusions intentional but that his audience is able to detect and understand them. These OT allusions show that Jesus is portrayed as a good shepherd who cares and provides for his sheep in the wilderness. This portrayal allows us to define the Christological theme of Mark’s first feeding narrative more precisely: Jesus is not merely the healer of the demon-possessed individuals but also the provider for people in spiritual and physical needs. Indeed, by evoking the Exodus tradition and the prophecy of Ezekiel, Mark signifies that Jesus’ multiplication of loaves and fish in the wilderness

represents the eschatological hope which is frequently linked with the new exodus. For Mark, Jesus comes as the fulfillment of the prophecy of the Davidic shepherd (cf. Mark 10:46-52; 11:10; 12:35-37). Thus, Jesus is the eschatological Davidic shepherd who will lead the new exodus.

III. Mark's Feeding Story and Type-Scenes

A. The Miraculous Feeding Narrative as a Type-Scene

In addition to the miraculous feeding of the Israelites in the wilderness (Exodus 16; cf. Ps 78:18-30), Mark's first feeding narrative is reminiscent of several other OT narratives such as the feeding miracles in the Elijah-Elisha narrative cycle (1 Kgs 17:8-16; 2 Kgs 4:1-7, and 42-44), particularly the story in which Elisha feeds a hundred men with twenty loaves of barley in 2 Kgs 4:42-44.²¹⁷ It is generally agreed that there is an intertextual relationship between Mark 6:30-44 and 2 Kgs 4:42-44.²¹⁸ The common denominator between these two stories is that they both belong to the genre of miraculous feeding stories. No literary genre could exist in a vacuum.²¹⁹ This is the same with the Markan feeding narrative of 6:30-44. Form critically, Mark's first feeding story belongs

²¹⁷ Gene M. Tucker (*Form Criticism of the Old Testament* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971] 38-41) classifies these stories as "prophetic legends."

²¹⁸ Commentators who see an intertextual relationship between these two texts include Taylor, *St. Mark*, 325; Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 407, 415-16; Heil, *The Gospel of Mark as Model for Action*, 145; Donahue and Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 208; Collins, *Mark*, 319-20; Boring, *Mark*, 184-85; and John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (vol. 2; ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1994) 960-61.

²¹⁹ Richard A. Burridge ("About People, by People, for People: Gospel Genre and Audiences," in *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* [ed. Richard Bauckham. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998] 114) writes: "Genre forms a kind of 'contract' or agreement, often unspoken or unwritten, or even unconscious, between an author and a reader, by which the author sets out to write according to a whole set of expectations and conventions and we agree to read or to interpret the work using the same conventions, giving us an initial idea of what we might expect to find."

to the miracle genre in the gospels. Martin Dibelius classifies the feeding miracle into the group of “Tale” (*Novelle*) because “the category which it is meant to describe is more ‘worldly’ and has more of its literary forms than the Paradigm.”²²⁰ Bultmann calls this feeding story a “nature miracle” implying Jesus’ power over nature.²²¹ Gerd Theissen categorizes the feeding stories as “gift miracles” because “they provide larger-than-life and extraordinary gifts, food transformed, increased, richly available.”²²²

While these form-critical classifications are helpful to our understanding of the genre of the miracle stories, the study of the original form and the historical context of the literary tradition of Mark’s first feeding narrative does not explain properly why there are so many similarities between Mark’s first feeding story and 2 Kgs 4:42-44. An intertextual reading, however, indicates that Mark may have employed a miraculous feeding story type-scene, a stock narrative structure that is available to him and familiar to his audience when writing his gospel. Walter Arend originated the study of the type-scene in his 1933 book *Die typischen Szenen bei Homer* in which he closely analyzed certain actions in *Iliad* and *Odyssey* which Homer describes more than once in much the same details and words, such as the scenes of arrival, sacrifice and eating, and journeys by sea and land, etc.²²³ Based on Arend’s study on compositional recurrences and

²²⁰ Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (LTT; trans. Bertram Lee Woolf; Cambridge: Lutterworth, 1987) 71.

²²¹ Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 215-18.

²²² Gerd Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 103-6.

²²³ Walter Arend, *Die typischen Szenen bei Homer* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1933) 28-39.

variations in the Greek epics of Homer, Robert Alter applied the type-scene concept in his treatment of narratives in the Hebrew Bible, particularly the betrothal type-scene at the well in Genesis.²²⁴ According to Donald K. Fry, “a type-scene is a recurring stereotyped presentation of conventional details used to describe a certain narrative event, requiring neither verbatim repetition nor a specific formula content.”²²⁵ It is a literary convention used in ancient storytelling in which certain fixed narrative patterns were retold in innovative ways to an audience to satisfy their expectation in a given story. These recurring patterns are not only literary conventions but also guideposts to the audience so that they know what to expect in a story. Conventional elements that made up the type-scene include similarities in language, motifs, themes, and plot lines. As James G. Williams points out:

Conventions provide a stylized set of expectations that an audience can anticipate. A complex of information is presented compactly “at a glance” or “in a word” through the use of formal scenes, images and symbols. . . . It is important, then, to note not only formal patterns but also reworkings of these patterns that contribute to the new plays of words, personages, images and symbols without complete departure from the ancient forms.²²⁶

²²⁴ Robert Alter, “Biblical Type-Scenes and the Uses of Convention,” *Critical Inquiry* 5 (1978) 355-68, which is revised as chapter three in *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981) 47-62. In his analysis of the repeated betrothal stories (the hero’s encounter with the future betrothed at a well) in the Hebrew Bible, Alter argues convincingly that the repeating of similar episodes is not as a duplication of sources but as the artistic employment of the type-scene. The other most commonly repeated biblical type-scenes identified by Alter include (1) the annunciation of the birth of the hero to his barren mother; (2) the epiphany in the field; (3) the initiatory trial; (4) danger in the desert and the discovery of a well or other source of sustenance; and (5) the testament of a dying hero.

²²⁵ Donald K. Fry, “Themes and Type-Scenes in *Elene* 1-113,” *Speculum* 44 (1969) 35.

²²⁶ James G. Williams, “The Beautiful and the Barren: Conventions in Biblical Type-Scenes,” *JSOT* 17 (1980) 111-12.

Since Mark's first feeding narrative is very similar to miracle stories in the Elijah-Elisha narrative cycle, especially 2 Kgs 4:42-44, it may well be that Mark is familiar with this form of genre and uses it as a "type-scene" in portraying Jesus as a prophet/miracle worker in his gospel.²²⁷ In this section, I will argue that Mark's first feeding narrative is based on a standard literary convention, i.e., a miraculous feeding story type-scene, from the Elijah-Elisha narrative cycle. I will also compare Mark 6:35-44 with 2 Kgs 4:42-44 and examine their linguistic and structural parallels in detail.

B. 2 Kgs 4:42-44 and Mark 6:35-44

Both 2 Kgs 4:42-44 and Mark 6:35-44 are miraculous feeding stories.²²⁸ The first one tells a story of feeding of one hundred men with twenty loaves and a preserved fruit cake. The second one contains a story in which Jesus feeds five thousand people with five loaves and two fish. The sequence of events and vocabulary are especially close between these two stories.

1. Linguistic Parallels

In the Elisha story (2 Kgs 4:42-44), a man comes from Baal-shalishah, bringing Elisha, "the man of God," twenty loaves of barley. Elisha orders his servant to give the bread "to the people that they may eat" (4:42). His servant objects: "How can I give this to a hundred men?" Elisha emphatically repeats his command and adds a short prophecy:

²²⁷ For parallels in rabbinic literature and stories from different cultures, see van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus*, 624-27. For a treatment of influence of the Elijah-Elisha Narrative on the gospels and Mark, see Thomas L. Brodie, *The Crucial Bridge: The Elijah-Elisha Narrative as an Interpretive Synthesis and a Literary Model of the Gospels* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000) 79-97, esp. 86-94.

²²⁸ Since Mark 6:30-34 is a Markan redactional introduction, I am using only Mark 6:35-44 in this section because it might represent the original/traditional feeding story.

“Thus says Yhwh: ‘They shall eat and there will be some left over’” (4:43). The servant obeys and the prophecy is fulfilled (4:44).

A careful comparison indicates close parallels in vocabulary between these two stories.²²⁹ Food items are similar in both stories: as bread (ἄρτους) and a preserved fruit cake (παλάθας) were brought to Elisha in the Elisha story (2 Kgs 4:42), so the bread (ἄρτους) and the fish (ἰχθύας) were also brought to Jesus in Mark’s story (implied in Mark 6:38). Both stories mention the specific numbers of loaves and people (twenty loaves/one hundred men in the Elisha story and five loaves/five thousand men in Mark’s story). The sentence structure and verbs of giving command are very similar:

2 Kgs 4:42: καὶ εἶπεν δότε τῷ λαῷ καὶ ἐσθιέτωσαν.
And he said, “Give it to the people and have them eat.”

Mark 6:37: ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· δότε αὐτοῖς ὑμεῖς φαγεῖν.
He answered and said to them, “Give them something to eat yourselves!”

As Elisha tells (εἶπεν) his servant to give the men the bread: “Give to the people and have them eat” (δότε τῷ λαῷ καὶ ἐσθιέτωσαν) in 2 Kgs 4:42, Jesus also tells (εἶπεν) his disciples to give the bread (and fish) to the crowd (δότε αὐτοῖς ὑμεῖς φαγεῖν) in Mark 6:37a. In both commands, the main verb δότε (“give”) is the second person plural imperative. In both stories, people ate (ἔφαγον) and there was food left over. As in the

²²⁹ Jeffery M. Leonard (“Identifying Inner-Biblical Allusions: Psalm 78 as a Test Case,” *JBL* 127 [2008] 246) proposes following methodological guidelines for cases that are not clear cut as direct quotations: “(1) Shared language is the single most important factor in establishing a textual connection. (2) Shared language is more important than nonshared language. (3) Shared language that is rare or distinctive suggests a stronger connection than does language that is widely used. (4) Shared phrases suggest a stronger connection than do individual shared terms. (5) The accumulation of shared language suggests a stronger connection than does a single shared term or phrase. (6) Shared language in similar contexts suggests a stronger connection than does shared language alone. (7) Shared language need not be accompanied by shared ideology to establish a connection. (8) Shared language need not be accompanied by shared form to establish a connection.”

Elisha story where the men ate and there was food left over (2 Kgs 4:44), the people also ate (and were satisfied) and there was food left over in Mark's story (Mark 6:42).

2. Structural Similarities

The structural parallels between these two stories are apparent. They are almost identical—both stories employ a common plot of sequence:

2 Kgs 4:42-44:

- (1) The servant brings twenty loaves of barely bread (v. 42a).
- (2) Elisha commands servant to feed the men (v. 42b).
- (3) The servant replies with doubt (v. 43a).
- (4) Elisha repeats his command (v. 43b).
- (5) The servant sets food before the people (v. 44a).
- (6) The people eat and there is food left over (v. 44b).

Mark 6:35-44:

- (1) The disciples have five loaves and two fish (v. 38b)
- (2) Jesus commands the disciples to feed the crowd (v. 37a).
- (3) The disciples answer skeptically (v. 37b).
- (4) Jesus orders the disciples to have the crowd sit down in groups (v. 39).
- (5) The disciples set food before the crowd (v. 41b).
- (6) The crowd eats and there is food left over (vv. 42-43).

Both stories have the same scenario of impossibility: too little food (twenty vs. five loaves) for too many people (one hundred vs. five thousand men). The dialogues in the middle section of both stories underline the tension between the characters in the narratives due to the dire situation. Both stories involve a doubtful and skeptical response toward the protagonist's command. As the servant of Elisha grumbles because there is not enough food for everyone (2 Kgs 4:43), so the disciples complain to Jesus that there is not enough food and they do not have money to purchase food for everyone (Mark 6:37). Nevertheless, the commands were obeyed and carried out by the

antagonists (in the sense that they are minor characters in both narratives). As a result, both stories conclude with people being fed (and satisfied).²³⁰

3. Some Important Differences

Although both stories exhibit close similarities, there are some major differences. For example, the Elisha story begins abruptly with a command from Elisha to feed the hundred men. It does not provide sufficient information to lead in the audience/readers for the miraculous feeding of one hundred men. On the other hand, in Mark's story there is an introduction with the geographical location and time of the day to prepare the audience. While the exchange between Elisha and his servant is very brief, the dialogue between Jesus and his disciples is fairly long and further reveals the problem: lateness of the time, a wilderness place, and the lack of food supply for the crowd. The other major difference is that in Mark's story Jesus commands the crowd to recline on the green grass, performs the common Jewish meal ritual at the beginning of a meal, and gives loaves to his disciples to set before the crowd (Mark 6:41) while in the Elisha story these types of actions are missing. The main reason for this difference may be due to the influence of the Last Supper and the practice of Eucharist in the early churches.²³¹ The third difference is the ratio between numbers of loaves and people. In the Elisha story, there were twenty loaves of bread to feed one hundred men while in the Markan story, there

²³⁰ As pointed out earlier in Chapter Two, Mark's first feeding story ends without the expected acclamation—reactions of wonder or amazement by the crowd as in previous miracle stories (cf. 1:27; 2:12; 4:41; 5:20, 42; 7:37). From an intertextual point of view, this lack of amazement by the crowd might be that it does not exist in the type-scene of the original feeding miracle story.

²³¹ In 2 Kgs 4:42-44 Elisha did not take the food but only declared a command from the Lord. This may indicate that Yhwh is the actual miracle worker of the story. Again, Mark is showing that his Jesus is greater than Elisha.

were only five loaves of bread to feed five thousand men. The large number difference of people and food supplies between the two stories indicates that the Markan Jesus is superior to Elisha. Mark adds these new elements to show that Jesus is the eschatological provider in the new exodus. As Peter D. Miscall points out:

To recognize that a text is related to another text is both to affirm and to deny the earlier text. It is affirmed as a type of model and source, while it is denied by being made secondary to the later text, precisely by being regarded as a model and a source that has been superseded. The later text displaces its model.²³²
In summary, Mark's first feeding narrative is very similar to several miraculous

feeding stories in the Elijah-Elisha narrative cycle, especially 2 Kgs 4:42-44. The author of Mark is familiar with this miraculous feeding story type-scene and patterns his story after it with significant augmentation to its structure and story plot for his own purpose. Mark has transplanted the context of the prophet feeding the people to his own prophet feeding story. Mark's reasons for using a miraculous feeding story type-scene to narrate the story of Jesus' feeding the multitude appear to be both literary and theological. It is literary because the miraculous feeding story convention is known to his audience and thus makes his Jesus story more accessible to them and arouses a powerful audience/reader response to his message; it is theological because he wants to place Jesus in the large context of the OT and makes the audience think of Jesus in terms of the OT prophets such as Elisha, only more powerful. In so doing, he adds new materials to the convention of the OT miraculous feeding narrative type-scene to achieve his own literary and theological goals.

²³² Peter D. Miscall, "Isaiah: New Heaven, New Earth, New Book," in *Reading between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Danna Nolan Fewell; Louisville: WJK, 1992) 44.

IV. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have read Mark 6:30-44 intertextually. I have argued that Mark and his audience share a similar first-century literary and cultural background. Because of this, Mark's audience is able to detect and understand his OT allusions. First, I argued that Mark's allusions are intended. The story of the Exodus/Moses and the prophecy of the coming of the Davidic shepherd were well known by the first-century believers since they most likely used the OT as their Scriptures. Parallels between Moses/David and Jesus in Mark's first feeding narrative are not all that clear. But the author of Mark has led his audience to make a conscious connection between them. Through the typology with Moses, Mark contrasts them and shows that Jesus not only recapitulates Moses, but supersedes him. By alluding to David, Mark implies that Jesus is the fulfillment of the shepherd-king prophesied by Ezekiel.

Second, I argued that Mark's first feeding story is modeled after a miraculous feeding narrative type-scene from the OT. It is generally recognized that Mark's first feeding narrative evokes the story of Elisha's miracle story of the loaves in 2 Kgs 4:42-44. An intertextual reading shows that there are substantial similarities in vocabulary, sequence of events, and plot between 2 Kgs 4:42-44 and Mark 6:35-44. Mark's knowledge of the Deuteronomistic History makes it most likely that he is familiar with the Elijah-Elisha narrative cycle. Therefore, when Mark recorded Jesus' feeding of the five thousand he reached back into his knowledge of the OT and used the miraculous feeding story type-scene as the structuring model for his first feeding story to achieve his own literary and theological goals.

In summary, in this chapter I have read Mark 6:30-44 intertextually. I have argued that Mark has intentionally alluded to the Exodus tradition and the prophecy of Ezekiel in portraying Jesus as the eschatological Davidic shepherd. I also argued that Mark's first feeding story follows a miraculous feeding story type-scene from the Elijah-Elisha narrative cycle, especially 2 Kgs 4:42-44 because both stories exhibit close parallels in language and narrative structure.

In the next chapter, I will first analyze Mark 6:30-44 from a narrative point of view including narrative features like the settings, character, plot, etc. I will then examine the audience's response based on their presupposed knowledge regarding the OT images. And finally, I will conclude this chapter with the significance of the contributions of narrative criticism to the study of Mark's first feeding story.

Chapter Four

Mark 6:30-44 as a Narrative

In the previous two chapters I have focused my attention on the original text, its variants, its OT background, and the issue of intertextuality of Mark's first feeding narrative. I have argued that the author of Mark is a redactor who arranged the tradition to make his points theologically and literarily. I also argued that Mark had purposefully alluded to the OT and that he used a miraculous feeding story type-scene in writing his first feeding narrative. While historical-critical methods look behind the gospel texts and search for sources and traditions, literary criticism treats each gospel as final unified texts and interprets them as they are heard by their audiences. Narrative criticism analyzes and evaluates the gospels as cohesive stories with a beginning, middle, climax, and end, replete with literary devices like allusion, conflict, irony, plot, themes, and so forth. "Narrative criticism counters the excesses of historical investigation and helps to highlight the author's main interest."²³³

In his book *Story and Discourse*, Seymour Chatman contends that a narrative essentially is a communication. He writes that "what is communicated is *story*, the formal content element of narrative; and it is communicated by *discourse*, the formal expression element."²³⁴ The purpose of this chapter is to examine the elements of the *discourse* of the first feeding narrative of Mark's gospel. In this chapter I will use

²³³ Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to New Testament* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1996) 26.

²³⁴ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 31.

narrative criticism to analyze Mark's first feeding narrative by focusing on the narrative perspectives (literary elements) of the text, such as the implied author, the implied audience, the narrator, point of view, the setting, plot, and characterization. I will conclude this chapter with a summary of the significance of narrative critical analysis of Mark's first feeding story.

I. Prologue (v. 30)

Mark's first feeding story begins with the apostles/disciples' return from their missionary trip (v. 30).²³⁵ In the opening scene the narrator introduces the primary characters of the story and their relationship to each other: Jesus and his disciples. Earlier in Mark's gospel the narrator told the implied audience that Jesus sent out the disciples and gave them authority over evil spirits (6:7-13). Thus, this scene closes the disciples' missionary trip separated by the episode of "the Death of John the Baptist" (6:14-29). The narrator, however, does not provide a specific setting for the story that the audience expected in this opening scene. The locale of the story remains unknown to the characters (except Jesus) as well as to the implied audience. The implied audience will come to know spatial and temporal details later as the narrative unfolds.

II. Jesus Teaches the Crowd (vv. 31-34)

Jesus' intention was to have a private time with his disciples (v. 31a). The crowd, however, had a different idea (vv. 37b, 33). This caused a conflict between Jesus and the crowd. By the end of this section the Markan Jesus showed his compassion to the crowd and thus the conflict is resolved by Jesus' teaching them many things (v. 34). The

²³⁵ I have discussed the use of the words οἱ ἀπόστολοι in this verse in Chapter Two.

narrator uses the interaction between Jesus and the crowd to prepare the setting for the feeding story and to introduce his characters. The narrative focus begins with the disciples but ends on Jesus as the eschatological shepherd who cares for his people.²³⁶

A. The Invitation (vv. 31-33)

Concerned about their well-being, Jesus invites the disciples to come by themselves to a wilderness place and rest for a while (v. 31; cf. 1:35). The invitation shows that Jesus is concerned to have a private time with the disciples after their missionary trip (cf. 4:34). It sets the narrative in motion and leads to a series of conflicting actions to follow. The wilderness place makes the connection with the earlier wilderness motif (1:3-4) as well as alerts the audience about what to expect in the next scene. The verb ἀναπαύσασθε (“rest,” “relax”) echoes Ps 23:2b (LXX 22:2b) where Yhwh provides a peaceful rest for the psalmist.²³⁷ Both of the OT allusions prepare the implied audience for the narrative climax later in the story. In the γάρ (“for”) clause the narrator explains that the reason that they did not have a chance to eat is due to the actions of “many” (πολλοί) who were coming and going (cf. 3:20).²³⁸

The γάρ clause not only introduces another character—many people/the crowd in the story—but also pushes them into the front stage. The story started as an episode in

²³⁶ Gérard Genette (*Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* [trans. J. E. Lewin. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980] 189-94) calls this change of focus within the “internal focalization” a *variable* (as compared to *fixed* or *multiple*) where the focus shifts from one character to another.

²³⁷ In LXX the feminine noun genitive ἀναπαύσεως (“relief,” “rest”) is used.

²³⁸ Fowler (*Let the Reader Understand*, 94) argues that “one of the chief rhetorical effects of the *gar* clause is reinforcing the reader’s dependence upon the narrator. In referential terms, the *gar* clause might be considered merely awkward afterthought.”

which Jesus and his disciples supposedly would have had a private meal and rest. The entrance of the crowd changed the dynamic of the story. The crowd (public) was actively seeking Jesus' attention as well. Since Jesus wanted his disciples to come with him alone, the crowd seemed to be on a collision course with his plan. The phrase κατ' ἰδίαν ("alone," "privately") forms a contrast with πολλοί ("many"). In Mark's first feeding story there are two plot lines: one is the interaction/conflict between Jesus and his disciples (the main storyline), and the other is the conflict/interaction between Jesus and the crowd (the secondary storyline). Once the crowd enters, the narrator has to put down his main storyline and deal with the secondary storyline.

There are two parallel stories in the secondary storyline: One is that Jesus invited the disciples to go to the wilderness place with him (v. 31a and v. 32). The other is the actions of "many people" who were coming and going, and found out where Jesus and the disciples were going away and arrived at the place ahead of them (v. 31b and v. 33). The narrator juxtaposes these two storylines and plays them off each other until v. 34. It creates suspense and immediately draws the implied audience into the story and makes them want to know what will happen next.²³⁹ Will Jesus and his disciples have a private dinner and rest? Will the crowd get a chance to see and hear Jesus?

So Jesus and his disciples were on their way to the wilderness place by "the boat" (v. 32).²⁴⁰ The wilderness place is repeated here for the second time. It forms a contrast

²³⁹ Forster (*Aspects of the Novel*, 27) writes that "*qua* story, it can only have one merit: that of making the audience want to know what happens next."

²⁴⁰ The boat is important here because it links Mark's first feeding story with other boat scenes (4:35-41; 6:45-52; 8:14-21) that "isolate Jesus and the disciples from the crowds by the setting of the

with πόλεων (“towns”) where the crowd came from in v. 33 and contributes to the tension for what will happen later in the story. The narrator mentioned “the wilderness place” twice (vv. 31-32) before the characters were even there, alerting the audience about the importance of the setting and creating certain expectations within them.²⁴¹

When the crowd saw and recognized that Jesus and the disciples were going away, they ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them (v. 33). The narrator portrayed the crowd as eager to receive Jesus. And it is precisely this eagerness from the crowd that conflicted with Jesus’ plan. The enthusiasm of the crowd is expressed by ἀπὸ πασῶν τῶν πόλεων συνέδραμον (“they ran from all the towns”). The tension between Jesus and the crowd kept building and drew the audience into the narrative and kept them in suspense because now they want to know what Jesus is going to do next. The obvious gap here is how the crowd would know where Jesus and the disciples were going. The narrator did not give an explanation for it. The implied audience had to fill this gap themselves.

Finally, the narrator introduced the wilderness setting by using the adverb ἐκεῖ (“there,” “to that place”). Although the actual “wilderness place” is not mentioned here, it is assumed that the audience understands that ἐκεῖ refers to “the wilderness place”

scenes and highlight the attitudes of the disciples” (see Robert C. Tannehill, “The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role,” *JR* 57 [1977] 399). For the importance of props in a narrative, see James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005) 105-8.

²⁴¹ Lane (*Mark*, 225) writes, “The site toward which the disciples set sail cannot be identified with any degree of certainty; but this was not important to the evangelist. What was significant was the character of the place to which Jesus and his disciples withdrew, and this is sufficiently indicated by the descriptive phrase ‘wilderness-place.’”

since the narrator had mentioned “the wilderness place” twice earlier (vv. 31-32) to prepare them for it.

In Mark’s gospel the setting of the wilderness is the starting place of the whole narrative (1:3-4). Subsequently, the wilderness appears again and becomes a primary locale for Jesus’ baptism (1:9), testing (1:12-13), and other early ministries (1:35, 45). Now in Mark’s first feeding story the implied author returns to the wilderness setting. Since the prior wilderness references recall the Israelites’ wilderness experience in the Exodus, the implied audience understands that this setting is a continuation of the wilderness from Mark 1:3-4. As in 1:3-4 there is no description regarding the wilderness in this feeding story.²⁴² Contextually, however, the implied audience knows that the wilderness setting here is not merely a geographic location that links to that of 1:3-4 but also has symbolic meaning as well. Since the wilderness is a place where Yhwh meets, tests, and provides for his people in the Exodus of the past, it symbolizes the power and mercy of Yhwh.

All the characters in the feeding story have now been introduced. The narrator began his story with Jesus and the disciples. Then he shifted the narrative focus to deal with Jesus and the crowd. Although the crowd is a minor character, its presence permeates the whole story and is the focal point of the conflict between Jesus and the

²⁴² Powell (*What Is Narrative Criticism?* 72) holds that “Description of spatial settings in the Gospels seems limited to dramatic and utilitarian effect. Scenery is only important insofar as it effects specified actions of the characters. This may mean on the one hand, that the reader’s role in comprehending the world of the story is less restricted and the possibility of different readers experiencing the story in different ways is enhanced. On the other hand, it may also mean that the narrator assumes certain perceptions on the part of the implied reader that do not come automatically to real readers toady.”

disciples.²⁴³ It is with these three characters that the plot of Mark's first feeding story unfolds. Since Mark's first feeding story is episodic in nature, it has its own plot with a beginning, middle, and end. The plot in the narrative is driven by nonantagonistic conflicts first between Jesus and the crowd and then Jesus and his disciples.²⁴⁴ Since Mark uses a miraculous feeding story type-scene from the OT (2 Kgs 4:42-44), the implied audience understands the plot because of the linguistic parallels and structural similarities between these two stories.²⁴⁵

B. The Shepherd (v. 34)

This scene begins with Jesus disembarking from the boat.²⁴⁶ Now the setting has shifted from the unknown locale to the wilderness place. Although the narrator does not specifically mention it, the audience notices this change of settings because he had alerted them twice earlier in the story (vv. 31-32). This was the first time in the narrative that

²⁴³ Uriel Simon ("Minor Characters in Biblical Narrative," *JSOT* 46 [1990] 14) notes that "A primary function of some minor characters is to further the plot while that of others is to lend the narrative greater meaning and depth."

²⁴⁴ There are two major types of conflict in the Gospel of Mark that drive the plot forward. The first type of conflict is antagonistic which involves the opponent challenging Jesus' authority. This type of conflict usually takes place between Jesus and the demonic forces (1:12-13, 21-27; 5:1-20), between Jesus and the Jewish authorities (2:6-12, 16-17; 2:23-3:6; 8:11-13; 11:15-19; 12:13-34; 15:31-32), between Jesus and the Roman authorities (15:1-15), and between Jesus and nature (4:33-40). This type of conflict constitutes the main plot of Mark's gospel which essentially is the expression of the ultimate struggle between God and Satan. The second type of conflict is nonantagonistic which results from a lack of faith of one party or a misunderstanding between two parties. This type of conflict usually happens between Jesus and his family (3:20-21, 31-35; cf. 6:1-6a), between Jesus and his disciples (4:35-41; 6:30-44; 8:1-10; 8:14-21; 14:26-31), and even between Jesus and God (14:35-36; 15:34). This type of conflict makes up the subplot in the Gospel of Mark. As the narrative unfolds and Jesus overcomes these conflicts, Mark's Jesus story progresses from the beginning to the end.

²⁴⁵ I have discussed the type-scene and the relationship between Mark's first feeding story and 2 Kgs 4:42-44 in Chapter Three.

²⁴⁶ Stein (*Mark*, 313) points out that Mark does not mention the disembarking of the disciples (it is assumed in 6:35) because he wants to focus the readers' attention on the key figure of the story—Jesus.

Jesus saw the crowd. The implied audience has heard similar situations where Jesus had attracted large crowds of people and he healed many, drove out demons, and taught them (1:32, 45; 3:7-12, 20; 4:1; 5:21). At first there was a tension between Jesus and the crowd because his plan to be alone with the disciples was interrupted. The narrator told the audience that, upon seeing the crowd, Jesus had compassion toward them “because they were like sheep without a shepherd.” The conflict then concluded with Jesus’ teaching the crowd many things.

Here the omniscient narrator not only knew Jesus’ inner feelings but also intruded into the story and directly commented on Jesus’ emotion.²⁴⁷ The narrator’s comment provides a glimpse of the innermost feelings of Jesus to the audience (cf. 1:41; 3:5). This inside view from the narrator is important because it is essential for characterization of Jesus and provides motivation for his following actions. It helps the audience to perceive the character favorably (or unfavorably) and guides their response to the character. Jesus had planned to have a private time with his disciples, not a public teaching. Now that his plan had been disrupted, not only was Jesus not upset but he had compassion toward the crowd. The passionate characterization of Jesus caught the audience off guard because they expected some irritation from Jesus toward the crowd for disrupting his plan. The

²⁴⁷ Shimon Bar-Efrat (*Narrative Art in the Bible* [JSOTS 70; Sheffield: Almond, 1989] 17) notes, “The narrator in most biblical narratives appears to be omniscient, able to see actions undertaken in secret and to hear conversations conducted in seclusion, familiar with the internal workings of the characters and displaying their innermost thoughts to us.” Petersen (“‘Point of View’ in Mark’s Narrative” 105) holds that the intrusive narrator in Mark’s gospel has a third-person and omniscient point of view. The evaluative point of view of the implied author and the narrator is identical with that of Jesus. This omniscient narrator assumes a posture of knowing everything that is in the characters’ minds and revealing this information selectively to the implied audience. Since the narrator shares the same point of view with Jesus, his commentary is reliable and trustworthy.

verb ἐσπλαγχνίσθη (“have compassion”) reveals the caring and nurturing character of Jesus and draws the audience closer to the character and the story. The comment ὅτι ἦσαν ὡς πρόβατα μὴ ἔχοντα ποιμένα (“for they were like sheep without a shepherd”) further connects Jesus to the OT shepherds (Moses in Num 27:17 and David in Ezek 34:5, 23) and reveals directly to the audience the quality and stature Jesus has (Mark 6:34b). At the same time, the narrator’s portrayal of the crowd as “leaderless and scattered” sheep set up the suspense for Jesus’ action later in the story. By *telling* (direct characterization) how Jesus felt and by using the shepherd allusion, the narrator characterized Jesus as the compassionate shepherd who cares for his people.²⁴⁸ Looking back at the narrative in Mark’s gospel thus far (1:1-6:29), we can see that the narrator’s portrayal of Jesus through his proclaiming, teaching, healing, and exorcizing have prepared the audience for Mark’s conclusion that Jesus is the new shepherd of Israel.²⁴⁹

After the compassionate teaching from Jesus, the feeding story has reached its first climax. The flow of the narrative seems to come to a halt. But the narrator immediately told the audience that the time was late and drew the audience right back into the story. Now the audience wants to know what is going to happen with the situation of the late hour in the wilderness.

²⁴⁸ Abrams and Harpham (*A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 43) write that “in telling, the author intervenes authoritatively in order to describe, and often to evaluate, the motives and dispositional qualities of the characters.”

²⁴⁹ Quoting from Zech 13:7 with some slight change, the Markan Jesus also refers to himself as the shepherd in the context of predicting the flight of the disciples after his death (14:27, 50).

III. Jesus Talks with the Disciples (vv. 35-38)

As the narrative unfolds, another tension emerges. As it was getting very late (v. 35a), the disciples suggested that Jesus dismiss the crowd to get their own food (vv. 35b-36). Jesus, however, wanted the disciples to feed the crowd (v. 37a). But the disciples shrug off their responsibility with an excuse of not having enough money to buy food for such a big crowd (v. 37b). When Jesus began to inquire about the food supply, he found out that there were only five loaves and two fish (v. 38). The primary narrative focus of this section is on the disciples. They initiated the conversation/conflict that demonstrated their lack of understanding. The crowd recedes to the background although their needs remain the focal point of the conflict between Jesus and the disciples.

A. The Time Factor (v. 35a)

The tempo of the narration slows down after the climax of Jesus' teaching the crowd. The narrator told the audience that it was already late (ὥρα πολλή), presumably because Jesus taught the crowd at length. The lateness of time alerts the audience immediately and draws them back to the story again after the resolution of the first conflict. Earlier in the story the narrator told the implied audience that the locale of the story is a wilderness place. Now he added a temporal dimension to that setting: it was very late.²⁵⁰ "Since chronological temporal settings in Mark are almost exclusively limited to days and hours, it should not be surprising to learn that the most prominent

²⁵⁰ Chatman (*Story and Discourse*, 141) argues that "a normal and perhaps principal function of setting is to contribute to the mood of the narrative."

typological temporal settings are periods of the day: evening, night, and morning.”²⁵¹

The temporal setting of Mark’s first feeding story is expressed in a typical Markan fashion: the late hour of the afternoon (in the wilderness). By adding the temporal constraint to the remote wilderness place, the narrator thus completed his building up of the full setting for the feeding story.

B. The Conversation/Conflict (vv. 35b-37)

1. The Disciples’ Suggestion (vv. 35b-36)

After diverting to deal with the tension between Jesus and the crowd, the narrator now resumed his main storyline between Jesus and his disciples. The narrative focus now has shifted back to Jesus and the disciples as was his original intention. The conversation between the disciples and Jesus began with their suggestion to dismiss the crowd to buy their own food.²⁵² The ensuing conversation further reveals conflicting ideas about who should and how to feed the crowd. The dialogue builds up the tension gradually and adds a dramatic element to the narrative. Robert Alter writes:

In any given narrative event, and especially, at the beginning of any new story, the point at which dialogue first emerges will be worthy of special attention, and in most instances, the initial words spoken by a personage will be revelatory, perhaps more in manner than in matter, constituting an important moment in the exposition of character.²⁵³

²⁵¹ Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* 80.

²⁵² Tannehill (“The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role,” 391) writes that in a narrative “the use of dialogue in a dramatic scene involves the expansion of the amount of space in a writing given to a segment of time in the story, compared to the alternative possibility of presenting an event or series of events in a brief summary. Thus dialogue in a dramatic scene emphasizes, while summary narration of events gives them a subordinate position.”

²⁵³ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981) 74.

The disciples' description of the situation is the first time in the narrative that the spatial and temporal settings are synchronized (v. 35b). Twice the narrator mentioned the lateness of the day in 6:35. The lateness of the day is one of the factors that prompts the disciples to suggest the crowd be dismissed. This intense characterization of the lateness in time indicates the seriousness of the situation and partially contributes to the conflict between Jesus and his disciples as how to resolve the problem. The lateness in the wilderness in the narrative, however, does not present a problem for the implied audience. Since the implied audience has more information about who Jesus is and a basic knowledge of the Exodus tradition, the lateness of the day rather creates a certain mood and cues them that something of grandeur is going to happen. For the disciples, however, it becomes yet another instance of their lack of faith and understanding.

The disciples' suggestion to send the crowd away to find their own food in the surrounding farms and villages initiated the conflict between them and Jesus (v. 36). The disciples' excuses were that it was a wilderness place and that it was very late, not only creating dramatic tension and suspense, but also generating interest in the implied audience to know how this conflict will be resolved. The suggestion from the disciples clearly shows that they do not understand Jesus' command. At the same time, it may have underlined their selfish motive to have a private meal with Jesus alone.

The dialogue between Jesus and the disciples indicates that they have very different points of view. In narrative criticism, *point of view* refers to the perspective or perspectives (established by the implied author) through which a story is told with the

characters, actions, plots, settings, and events.²⁵⁴ Early in v. 34 the narrator had described Jesus as the shepherd who had compassion for the crowd (Num 27:17). This OT allusion further implies that the crowd was left without care by its leaders as “the scattered sheep” (Ezek 34:5). The disciples’ suggestion to dismiss the crowd not only shows their incomprehension about the identity/role of Jesus but also contradicts Jesus’ (and the narrator’s) point of view. Thus the conversation between Jesus and the disciples reveals the sharp differences in their thinking: while Jesus is “thinking in terms of the things of God,” the disciples are “thinking in terms of the things of humans.”²⁵⁵

2. Jesus’ Reply (v. 37a)

Jesus’ answer to the disciples was: “δότε αὐτοῖς ὑμεῖς φαγεῖν” (“Give them something to eat yourselves”). The narrator’s emphatic use of the second person plural imperative aorist active δότε (“give”) and the second personal plural pronoun ὑμεῖς (“you yourselves”) clearly indicates that Jesus’ reply is a command. He wanted the disciples to take the initiative and feed the crowd. It is their moment to shine again like they did in their missionary trip (6:7-13). Jesus’ reply is consistent with his compassionate character. As a God-sent shepherd, he cannot accept the disciples’ suggestion to send the crowd away. Heil writes:

²⁵⁴ Boris Uspensky (*A Poetics of Composition: The Structure of the Artistic Text and Typology of a Compositional Form* [trans. Valentina Zavarin and Susan Wittig; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973] 8-100) conceptualizes point of view as functioning on four different planes: ideological, phraseological, spatial and temporal, and psychological. A narrator is constrained by these planes or aspects of the implied author’s point of view in telling a story. Of all these aspects, the ideological or the evaluative point of view is perhaps most salient to the study of the gospel narratives.

²⁵⁵ Petersen, “‘Point of View’ in Mark’s Narrative,” 107-8.

For Jesus to dismiss and thus “scatter” the people without food would frustrate his role as God’s true shepherd-king to restore and preserve the unity of his people and provide them with food (Ezek 34:1-24), as God through the leadership of Moses and Aaron fed the people of Israel in the wilderness during the Exodus event (Exodus 16) (6:36).²⁵⁶

Similar to 6:7 where Jesus gave the disciples authority over evil spirits, Jesus commanded the disciples to take control of the circumstance and provide food for the crowd. But the disciples could not comprehend and missed a golden opportunity to serve the people.

3. The Disciples’ Response (v. 37b)

The implied audience anticipates that the disciples will follow Jesus’ command and do something to feed the crowd. After all, the disciples had been with Jesus all this time and had been given authority to teach and exorcize. On the other hand, the audience can empathize with the disciples because they probably did not have any food with them since Jesus had told them not to take bread with them (6:8).²⁵⁷ But instead of following the order, the disciples’ response was quarrelsome and lacked initiative. Their thinking was preoccupied by human capabilities and *denarii* (money). This response catches the audience off guard because it is not what they would expect even with their empathy for the disciples. For them it seems that the disciples had worked out their difficulties with Jesus after being rebuked in 4:40. The narrator’s favorable tone toward the disciples’ return from their missionary trip in the beginning of the story certainly encouraged this

²⁵⁶ Heil, *The Gospel of Mark as Model for Action*, 144.

²⁵⁷ Alessandro Giovannelli (“In Sympathy with Narrative Characters,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 67 [2009] 83-84) writes that “empathy seems to be the paradigm of a self-oriented response: roughly, when empathizing with someone, I vicariously experience his or her mental states, in a sense as if they were mine. Sympathy, instead, seems to be paradigmatically other oriented. Responding sympathetically seems to emphasize the other’s experiences and situation, often perceived as different from one’s own.”

perception: they just came back from a mission on which Jesus had sent them. They reported to Jesus everything they had done and taught in that trip. Jesus in turn wanted them to go with him to the wilderness place and rest for a while.

However, the unexpected response from the disciples reminds the audience of the disciples of old (4:13, 40) and alerts them to distance themselves once again from the disciples.²⁵⁸ From now on, the narrator's portrayal of the disciples generally remains in the negative tone that he started in 4:40 until the end of Mark's gospel. In my judgment, the disciples' question is neither "disrespectful,"²⁵⁹ nor "sarcastic,"²⁶⁰ but rather "rhetorical."²⁶¹ It truly demonstrated their incomprehension. The disciples' response brought the conflict to its climax. The expectation and hope of the audience that the disciples have finally aligned themselves with Jesus after the missionary trip is shattered (6:7-12, 30).²⁶²

²⁵⁸ In Mark's gospel the disciples responded positively to the call of Jesus and followed him at first (1:16-20; 2:14). But as the narrative goes on, they were confused and do not understand even though they were with Jesus most of the time and received private instructions from him (4:13; 6:52; 8:21). At the end of the gospel, to the surprise and dismay of the audience, the disciples even abandoned Jesus and fled (14:50). Thus the implied audience not only witnesses the changes the disciples went through in Mark's gospel but also is surprised by Peter's three denials of Jesus (14:66-72). The potential shock of Judas's betrayal of Jesus (14:43-46) to the audience, however, is given away by the comment of the intrusive narrator in 3:19.

²⁵⁹ Lane, *Mark*, 228.

²⁶⁰ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 407.

²⁶¹ Heil, *The Gospel of Mark as Model for Action*, 144.

²⁶² Tannehill ("The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role," 394-95) writes, "The implied author of Mark shapes a story which encourages the reader to associate himself with the disciples. . . . But as the inadequacies of the disciples' response to Jesus become increasingly clear, the reader must distance himself from the disciples and begin to seek another way. . . . The recognition of the disciples' failure and the search for an alternative way become a search for the new self who can follow Jesus faithfully as a disciple."

C. The Dilemma (v. 38)

Realizing that the disciples did not understand and were incapable of providing food for the crowd, Jesus began to inquire about the food supply. The inquiry shows that Jesus will take the matter into his own hands. Jesus' demeanor was gentle and calm. There was no negative emotion from Jesus toward the lack of comprehension by the disciples (cf. 4:40). The implied audience takes the cue from Jesus' inquiry that he is going to do something and therefore the conflict will be brought to a resolution. However, the discovery of only five loaves and two fish creates a dilemma and adds more dramatic tension to the situation. The supply of five loaves and two fish forms a sharp contrast with the large crowd that needs to be fed.

The word ἄρτους ("loaves," vv. 37, 38, 41, and 44) is not only crucial to this feeding story, but also establishes it as a kernel event in Mark's gospel.²⁶³ There are two reasons for this argument. First, the feeding story takes place again later in Mark's gospel (8:1-10) and it has foreshadowed the Last Supper on the night before Jesus' arrest (14:22-25). Second, the loaf (ἄρτον/ἄρτους/ἄρτοις) theme continues to appear after Mark's first feeding story in the episodes of "Jesus Walks on the Water" (6:52), "the Tradition of the Elders" (7:2, 3), "the Faith of a Syrophenician Woman" (7:27-28), and "the Feeding of Four Thousand" (8:5, 6) up till "the Yeast of the Pharisees and Herod" (8:14, 16, 17, 19) when Jesus rebukes his disciples for their incomprehension and

²⁶³ Chatman (*Story and Discourse*, 53) writes that "Kernels are narrative moments that give rise to cruxes in the direction taken by events. They are nodes or hinges in the structure, branching points which force a movement into one of two (or more) possible paths. . . . Kernels cannot be deleted without destroying the narrative logic. In the classical narrative text, proper interpretation of events at any given point is a function of the ability to follow these ongoing selections, to see later kernels as consequences of earlier."

hardness of heart. Thus, Mark 6:30-8:21 forms a narrative block with the Feeding of the

Five Thousand as the kernel event:

6:30-44	Feeding of five thousand (a Jewish feeding).
6:52	Lack of understanding about the loaves.
7:2-5	Clean and unclean food.
7:27-28	The Syrophoemcian woman and children's crumbs.
8:1-10	Feeding of four thousand (a Gentile feeding).
8:14-21	Lack of understanding about the loaves.

Within this narrative block Mark's first feeding story is pivotal. If we leave it out, the narrative logic of this narrative block would be ruined. Furthermore, without the feeding of the five thousand, the narrative background of the second feeding story and the Last Supper will also be depleted. Therefore, Mark's first feeding story is a kernel event.

IV. Jesus Feeds the Crowd (vv. 39-42)

The narrative seems to be going nowhere after the disciples' reply. But just as the implied audience wonders about what is going to happen next, the Markan Jesus ordered the disciples to organize the crowd in groups of hundreds and fifties (vv. 39-40), and he took the five loaves and fish and distributed them to the disciples to feed the crowd (v. 41). The conflict that began with the suggestion to dismiss the crowd to get their own food now leads to a series of actions by Jesus (vv. 39, 41). Realizing their ill-advised suggestion, the disciples now participated in organizing the crowd and distributing food to them (vv. 39, 41). Everyone ate and was satisfied (v. 42). Thus, the conflict situation that seemed impossible was brought to a satisfactory conclusion.

Now both storylines have converged here as the narrative focus shifts back to Jesus again. The narrator showed that Jesus had total control of the situation by ordering

the crowd to sit down and by taking the loaves and fish to distribute among the disciples to set before the people. The disciples receded to supporting roles.

A. The Preparation (vv. 39-40)

The reaction from the Markan Jesus is calm and controlled (cf. 4:13, 40). The narrator told the audience that Jesus commanded (ἐπέταξεν) the disciples to organize the crowd to sit in groups on the green grass (v. 39). Early in the narrative, the narrator shows that the crowd came on foot from all the towns in a chaotic fashion in pursuit of Jesus as sheep without a shepherd. Here the narrator has continued to work with the OT shepherd theme he introduced in v. 34. In Ezekiel 34 the political and religious leaders in Jerusalem neglected their responsibility and abused their authority in seeking their own gain (Ezek 34:1-4). The flock was scattered over the earth because there was not a shepherd who cared for them (34:5-6). But Yhwh will seek and gather his scattered sheep and feed them with good pasture so they can lie down in good grazing land and rest (34:12-15). And he further promises to “set over them one shepherd, my servant David” to feed his flock as their shepherd (34:23).

Similar to the situation in Ezekiel 34, the crowd in Mark’s first feeding story was also “scattered,” disoriented, and without a shepherd (6:33b-34). But unlike the religious leaders and Herod (2:16; 2:23-3:6; 6:14-28), the compassionate shepherd Jesus not only taught the crowd but also ordered “the scattered sheep” to sit down in groups. Ordering the crowd into groups signifies that, as a God-sent shepherd, Jesus is actively caring for and reordering them according to God’s plan after teaching them earlier (6:34).

The image of $\chi\lambda\omega\rho\acute{\omega}$ $\chi\acute{o}\rho\tau\omega$ (“the green grass”) unites “the rest” and “the shepherd” themes together (vv. 31, 34). Now the narrator’s intent to portray Jesus as the God-sent shepherd is even clearer. The scene further alludes to the rest theme in Ps 23:2 where the psalmist states that Yhwh is his shepherd who makes him lay down (rest) in green pastures. The rest theme is also prophesied and emphasized by the prophet Ezekiel when Yhwh the shepherd declares that “I will feed my flock and I will give them rest” (Ezek 34:15; cf. Isa 40:11). The shepherd’s responsibility is to seek out his sheep, gather them together, and bring them safely to the sheepfold. Like a good shepherd, Jesus cared for “the scattered sheep” and ordered them into groups. By placing the crowd in reclining posture commonly taken while dining, the narrator has described a scene that is “suggestive of the position people will assume in the eschatological banquet of the kingdom of God (Matt 8:11; Luke 12:37; 13:29).”²⁶⁴ Instead of having a private time with the disciples, the Markan Jesus is to host a restful meal for the crowd in anticipating the messianic banquet in the eschaton (Isa 25:6).

The way in which the narrator uses different verbs to describe the manner in which Jesus addresses the disciples shows that maybe even Jesus thought that the disciples had finally turned around after his private teaching (4:34) and their missionary trip (6:7-13). Following the dismissal of the crowd suggestion from the disciples earlier in the story, the narrator used ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν (“answered and said”) to describe Jesus’ reply to the disciples. But they did not take it seriously even though the command to feed the crowd is clear to the audience (v. 37a). The result was the disciples’ argumentative

²⁶⁴ Heil, *The Gospel of Mark as Model for Action*, 144.

question regarding the lack of money to buy food for the crowd (v. 37b). After that refusal the narrator now uses the verb ἐπέταξεν (“command”) in the story as Jesus addressed the disciples (v. 39). This verbal progression indicates that Jesus has come to a true realization with regard to the spiritual condition of his disciples. The narrator did not explain why the disciples refused to obey Jesus’ first command to feed the crowd (v. 37a), but now they changed their mind and decided to follow his order. Finally, the disciples realized the gravity of the matter and understood the message from Jesus. At this point the narrator’s tone toward the disciples temporarily returned to being favorable since they were back to the norm of “following Jesus.”

The narrator’s clarification that the crowd sat down “in groups of hundreds and fifties” (v. 40) further connects this scene to the Exodus tradition. The division recalls the similar group formation of the Israelites in the wilderness under the leadership of Moses during the Exodus (Exod 18:21).²⁶⁵ It signifies that Jesus is in total control of the chaotic situation of the large crowd. Earlier in v. 34 the narrator has already alluded Jesus to two OT shepherds: one is to lead people and arrange them in groups (Num 27:17; Exod 18:25), the other is to gather and feed the scattered sheep (Ezek 34:5, 23). It is based on this background that the narrator portrays Jesus as the one who is sent by Yhwh not only to be the shepherd who will lead and regroup the people in their new exodus but also as his servant David who will give them rest and feed them in the wilderness. By adding the exodus allusion to Jesus’ reordering “the scattered sheep” in groups (v. 39), the narrator interweaves these two imageries creatively to portray Jesus as the God-sent

²⁶⁵ I have discussed this OT allusion in Chapter Three.

compassionate shepherd who actively reaches out for his people. Since Mark's use of this OT allusion is eschatological in nature, the audience expects that Jesus' command would lead to the celebration of an eschatological feast in the wilderness.

B. The Feeding (v. 41-42)

Like any other author in literature who tells the audience only what is important to the development of the characters and the plots of the story, the Markan narrator did not describe everything in detail about the feeding to the audience. He uses a series of verbs to describe Jesus in action: that Jesus took five loaves and two fish, broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people, and divided two fish for πάντων ("all," v. 41). Jesus' action forms a pointed contrast with the disciples' inaction in the story. By now the feeding story had reached its climax with Jesus' multiplying the five loaves and two fish: everyone ate and was satisfied (v. 42).

The narrator purposefully left out the details of Jesus' multiplication of the loaves and fish because he did not think that they were important, since the main interest of the audience is in the actual outcome or the resolution of the conflict. Rather, he chose to focus on those elements that are important to the characterization of Jesus. The phrase ἀναβλέψας εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν ("looking up to the heaven") harks back to the scene in Mark 1:11 where a heavenly voice declares that Jesus is God's beloved Son and thus reminds the audience that it is by God's power that Jesus performs the mighty deed of feeding the crowd.

Earlier in v. 34 the narrator *told* the audience with an OT allusion that Jesus is the shepherd with compassion. Now he is backing up his claim by *showing* Jesus' deeds.²⁶⁶ Jesus is not only concerned with the crowd's spiritual hunger by teaching them (cf. Prov 9:5; Sir 15:3, 24:19) but also their physical hunger by feeding them. The teaching and feeding indicate that the Markan Jesus actively gathers his scattered sheep and attends them like the Davidic shepherd prophesied by the prophet Ezekiel (34:23). In addition, the personality of Jesus is revealed through his interactions with other characters in the story. By *showing* his interaction with the disciples and his mighty deeds, the compassionate shepherd Jesus portrayed by the narrator becomes vivid and lively.

V. Epilogue (vv. 43-44)

The feeding story ended without any fanfare. The miraculous feeding was confirmed through the narrator's comments (vv. 43-44). The story that began with the suggestion from the disciples to dismiss the crowd to get their own food led to a conflict between Jesus and the disciples, reached its climax with Jesus' feeding the crowd, and now came to the end. The conflict had its closure. In a strict sense, the feeding story ended in v. 42 when the conflict had been brought into a satisfactory resolution when everyone ate and was satisfied. But the narrator felt that he needed to provide the

²⁶⁶ Abrams and Harpham (*A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 43) write, "In showing, the author simply presents the characters' talking and acting, and leaves it entirely up to the reader to infer the motives and dispositions that lie behind what they say and do."

audience with some facts about the feeding.²⁶⁷ By providing these facts, the narrator continues to work on his reordering theme alluding to the OT.

In the aftermath of the feeding the narrator told the implied audience that they picked up twelve basketfuls of leftovers (v. 43). Intertextually, the word δώδεκα (“twelve”) recalls the significance it has in both the OT and NT.²⁶⁸ The number “twelve” is a dominant reference in the OT: the twelve sons of Jacob (Gen 35:22) and the twelve tribes of Israel (Gen 49:28). The significance of the number “twelve” is carried over to the NT: twelve tribes of Israel (Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30; Acts 26:7; Jas 1:1; Rev 21:12, 14). In Mark’s gospel, the woman healed by Jesus suffered with a hemorrhage for twelve years (5:25); Jairus’s daughter whom Jesus raised was twelve years old (5:42). Since the disciples just returned from the missionary trip, the number twelve here refers primarily to the selection and sending of the twelve apostles (Mark 3:14; 6:7; cf. Matt 10:1, 2, 5; 11:1; Luke 6:13). The number twelve, however, is more than just a mere reference to the twelve tribes of Israel or Jesus’ selection of the twelve. Rather, it shows that Jesus has claimed the people of God as a whole in all its divisions.²⁶⁹ Thus God’s people will no longer be leaderless and scattered but will be in perfect order under the new shepherd. The number twelve then not only signifies the eschatological abundance of food but also

²⁶⁷ Booth (*The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 169-209) writes that the implied author shapes the value and ideology of the audience through the narrator by offering “reliable commentaries” such as: (1) Providing Facts, Picture, or Summary; (2) Molding Beliefs; (3) Relating Particulars to Established Norms; (4) Heightening the Significance of Events; (5) Generalizing the Significance of the Whole Work; (6) Manipulating Mood; (7) Commenting Directly on the Work Itself.

²⁶⁸ I have discussed this in Chapter Two.

²⁶⁹ Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, “δώδεκα,” *TDNT*, 2. 326.

indicates that Jesus, as a God-sent shepherd, looks and cares for all “scattered sheep” by bringing them back orderly to God’s sheepfold. Keeping with the reordering theme, the number twelve alludes to the perfect order of God’s people in the eschaton (Gen 17:20, 25:16, 35:22, 49:28; Exod 24:4, 28:21, 39:14; Deut 1:23; Josh 3:12, 4:2-3; Rev 21:12, 14).

The narrator further commented that there were five thousand men who had partaken of the loaves (v. 44). In the biblical tradition the number “χίλιοι” (“thousand”) is significant and often refers to the organization of the Israelites in history (cf. Exod 18:21, 25; Num 31:14; Deut 1:15; 1 Kgs 19:18).²⁷⁰ The narrator’s use of the word πεντακισχίλιοι (“five thousand”) continues his earlier allusion to the Israelites’ grouping formation in the wilderness in v. 40. It not only highlights the miraculous character of the feeding but also climaxes the theme of Jesus’ reordering the people of God into a united whole.²⁷¹

In the end, the narrator did not mention the crowd’s reaction to the feeding (cf. 1:27; 2:12; 4:41; 5:20, 42; 7:37) because he did not think that it was essential to the story. The storyline between Jesus and the crowd was left open-ended (cf. 6:45; 7:17; 8:1, 6; 9:14). Even though the crowd was described as enthusiastic in pursuing Jesus earlier in the narrative, their relationship with Jesus was less enduring and intense than that of Jesus and the disciples which was the narrator’s primary concern in the story. Although the conflict about who should and how to feed the crowd was resolved by Jesus’ feeding the five thousand men, the large conflict between Jesus and the disciples in Mark’s

²⁷⁰ Eduard Lohse, “χιλιάς, χίλιοι,” *TDNT*, 9. 467-70.

²⁷¹ Heil, *The Gospel of Mark as Model for Action*, 145.

gospel remains unresolved. As a matter of fact, Mark's first feeding story introduces a narrative block specifically dealing with the disciples' incomprehension relating to "loaves" (6:30-8:21). M. Eugene Boring asserts that "the story is not really completed until the narrator's comment on the disciples' lack of understanding at verse 52, elaborated in 8:14-20."²⁷² But I believe that Mark has intentionally left the conflict between Jesus and the disciples open-ended for the audience to ponder concerning the disciples' fate: "What will happen to them?" "Will they finally understand Jesus' identity and the meaning of the true discipleship?" Although Mark's first feeding story has enlightened the implied audience christologically, they are still bewildered about the relationship between Jesus and the disciples. This bewilderment will cause the implied audience to want to seek answers in the narratives to follow. The suspense continues.

In summary, there are two storylines in Mark's first feeding story. One deals with the interaction and conflict between Jesus and the disciples and the other deals with the tension and interaction between Jesus and the crowd. The narrator began his story with the disciples returning from their missionary trip and Jesus inviting them to a wilderness place to rest for a while (vv. 30-31a). But the entrance of the crowd has forced the narrator to shift the narrative focus to the tension between Jesus and the crowd because his plan was interrupted by the crowd's enthusiasm to see him (vv. 31b, 33). After Jesus' teaching of the crowd (v. 34), the narrator shifted the focus back to Jesus and the disciples, which was his original intention. The conversation between Jesus and the disciples revealed their different points of view and led to the conflict about who should

²⁷² Boring, *Mark*, 187.

feed the crowd and how (vv. 35-38). Realizing the incomprehension of the disciples, Jesus took the matter into his own hands and ordered the disciples to have the crowd sit down in groups of hundreds and fifties on the green grass (vv. 39-40). Jesus fed the crowd with a meager five loaves and two fish yet every one ate and was satisfied (vv. 41-42). After the feeding, there were twelve basketfuls of leftovers and there were five thousand men who had partaken of the meal (vv. 43-44). The narrator skillfully wove these two storylines together and created a suspense, expectation, and resolution for the audience.

Although Mark's first feeding narrative is episodic in nature, it fits in the large scheme of Mark's kerygmatic program of the gospel because it is a "kernel event" in the narrative and it foreshadows the second feeding story (8:1-10) and the Last Supper (14:22-24). Furthermore, Mark's first feeding story launches a narrative block (6:30-8:21) dealing with the disciples incomprehension in relation to the loaves. Thus, even though the conflict about feeding the crowd had its closure, the large conflict between Jesus and his disciples remains unresolved. The narrator has intentionally left it open-ended for the audience to contemplate the disciples' future.

Through *telling* (v. 34) and *showing* (v. 41) the narrator has portrayed Jesus as a vivid and lively character who is the compassionate shepherd who teaches and feeds the people of God. The narrator's comment in v. 34 not only summarizes Jesus' activities to this point in Mark's gospel but also unmistakably connects (and compares) him with the great OT shepherds: Moses (Num 27:17) and David (Ezek 34:5, 23). Through these actions and allusions the audience receives a clear picture of Jesus as a God-sent

shepherd who cares for and reorders “the scattered sheep” in the story. Therefore, Mark’s first feeding story recapitulates what the implied audience has already experienced thus far in Mark’s gospel and also serves as an indicator of what they can expect in the future with regard to Jesus’ commission. He not only cares for his sheep as a good shepherd will do but even gives up his life for them (15:33-37).

In the next chapter I will first provide a summary of findings of my narrative-critical analysis of Mark 6:30-44. I will then conclude the chapter with a summary of how these findings contribute to the current study of Mark’s first feeding story.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

This dissertation has presented a comprehensive narrative-critical analysis of Mark's first feeding story and sought to illustrate how the implied audience was expected to respond to Mark's use of the OT images in Mark 6:30-44 that portray Jesus as the eschatological shepherd who teaches and feeds his flock in the wilderness.

The responses of the audience are based not only on their presupposed knowledge of these images but also on what they have heard of them in the previous narrative (1:3-4, 21-28). This concluding chapter will summarize the research and results of my analysis and will delineate its contributions to the study of the Gospel of Mark.

I. Summary of Research

Regarding the structure of this dissertation, I have proceeded in the following way. The first chapter was an introduction. I first surveyed briefly recent scholarly literature with regard to Mark 6:30-44 and concluded that, first, scholars generally agree that Mark's first feeding story has been influenced by the Exodus/wilderness themes. Not only do they see the connection between the Exodus event and the first half of the Gospel of Mark, but they also point out the eschatological significance of the wilderness theme in Mark's gospel. They argue that Mark's use of the wilderness indicates that Jesus will lead a new exodus of God's people. Second, there have been literary investigations of Mark's first feeding story as well. These studies, however, tend to treat Mark's first feeding narrative in the larger context of the Gospel of Mark and they deal only with

certain features of the narrative, such as the techniques of echo and foreshadowing. And third, commentators have focused on the literary unity of Mark's first feeding story and recognized that there is continuity in Mark's wilderness theme (1:3-4, 12-13, 35, 45; 6:31, 32, 35) and a parallel between Mark 6:30-44 and 2 Kgs 4:42-44. The commentaries, however, have tended to give only a brief analysis of the text and minimum attention to the literary features of Mark 6:30-44.

The results of this review of literature suggest that since there has not been a thorough and comprehensive narrative-critical study of Mark 6:30-44 with regard to its OT allusions, there is a need to investigate Mark's first feeding story as a coherent literary unit on its own and also see how it functions with regard to the narrative of the Gospel of Mark as a whole. This dissertation has fulfilled this need by applying the narrative-critical method to interpret Mark's first feeding story in view of understanding it as a narrative within its literary context.

The first chapter also included a section that explicates the relationship between literary terms like the implied author/real author, the implied audience/real audience, the text and the meaning of the text, etc., that are necessary for the literary analysis of Mark's first feeding story. With regard to the relationship between the authorial intent and the role of the audience/reader, I have argued that since the human communication process includes three distinct components: the sender (the author), the message (the text), and the receiver who accepts and decodes the message (the audience/the reader listens/reads the text), placing emphasis on one part over another would break and violate this basic communication principle. It would not help us to appreciate the full significance of the

text. Therefore, both the author's intention and the audience's activity are important to the understanding of the text. The concluding part of the first chapter included a brief discussion of the methodology to be used in this dissertation.

The second chapter was an exegetical study using the redaction-critical method that delves into the text of Mark's first feeding story and attempts to discern the redaction (or editing) of the traditional sources by the author of Mark. The aim of this chapter was to see what kind of theological viewpoints and Christological significance Mark is trying to make by editing his sources. I have argued that form critically Mark 6:30-34 and 6:35-44 belong to two separate traditions: the sending of the Twelve and the miraculous feeding. Mark's long introduction (vv. 30-34) to the feeding story (vv. 35-44) indicates his intent—he wants to portray Jesus as a good shepherd who cares for his sheep by teaching and feeding them. Since both units share a common wilderness theme, Mark has put them together for his own theological/literary purposes.

While portraying Jesus as the God-sent eschatological shepherd who reaches out to his people, the author of Mark also demonstrates the lack of faith and lack of understanding of the disciples through this feeding story. Although Jesus has shown his authority and power on many occasions which should have led to the recognition by the disciples that he is the Messiah, the disciples were blind to these signs. As a part of the negative portrayal of the disciples, Mark's first feeding story continued to depict them as misunderstanding and even quarrelsome in response to Jesus' command to feed the crowd.

I have suggested that Mark's first feeding narrative foreshadows the Last Supper (14:22). A comparison of the terminology of these two events showed their similarities: λαβών ("took," 6:41; 14:22), εὐλόγησεν/εὐλογήσας ("blessed," 6:41, 14:22), κατέκλασεν/ἔκλασεν ("broke," 6:41, 14:22), ἐδίδου/ἔδωκεν ("gave," 6:41, 14:22).

Although there are differences, the similarities between these two events outweigh them. Furthermore, Mark's emphasis on the abundance of food provided by Jesus in the story evokes the imagery of an eschatological banquet. Therefore, Mark's first feeding narrative not only anticipates the celebration of the Last Supper but also looks forward to the messianic banquet at the eschaton.

The third chapter focused on the issue of intertextuality of Mark's first feeding story with regard to the OT allusions and the miraculous feeding story type-scene. The first part of the chapter dealt specifically with three examples of OT allusions (Exod 16:1, 3, 10; Num 27:17/Ezek 34:5; Exod 18:21) from Mark's first feeding story: the wilderness theme (vv. 31, 32, 35), the compassionate shepherd (v. 34), and the orderly grouping (v. 40). My argument was that Mark's allusions are intentional and because Mark and his audience shared a similar first-century literary and cultural background, the audience was able to identify and understand his OT allusions. Furthermore, since the audience most likely used the OT as their Scriptures, the story of the Exodus/Moses and the prophecy of the coming of the Davidic shepherd were well known by the first-century believers. Although parallels between Moses/David and Jesus in Mark's first feeding narrative are not all that clear, the Markan narrator has led his audience to make a conscious connection between them by his OT allusions.

The second part of the third chapter addressed the interrelation between Mark's first feeding story and 2 Kgs 4:42-44. I have argued that the author of Mark was familiar with a miraculous feeding narrative type-scene from the OT Elijah-Elisha narrative cycle and modeled his feeding story after it. An intertextual reading shows that there are substantial similarities in vocabulary, sequence of events, and plot between 2 Kgs 4:42-44 and Mark 6:35-44. Mark's knowledge of Deuteronomistic History makes it most likely that he is familiar with the Elijah-Elisha narrative cycle. Thus, when Mark told the story of Jesus' feeding of the five thousand, he used the miraculous feeding story type-scene as the structuring model for his first feeding story to achieve his own literary and theological goals.

The fourth chapter was a full-scale study of Mark's first feeding story using narrative-critical analysis. The narrative analysis showed that there are two storylines in Mark's first feeding story: one dealing with the interaction and conflict between Jesus and the disciples and the other dealing with the tension and interaction between Jesus and the crowd. The tension between Jesus and the crowd was caused by incompatible desires of Jesus and the crowd. It was resolved by Jesus' teaching the crowd many things (6:34b). The conflict between Jesus and the disciples over whom and how to feed the crowd was resolved by Jesus' feeding the crowd with five loaves and two fish (6:41-42). Even though the conflict about feeding the crowd has its closure, the larger conflict between Jesus and his disciples remains unresolved, leaving the story open-ended for the audience to contemplate the disciples' future. The narrator has skillfully woven these two storylines together and created suspense (will the crowd be fed?), expectation (will

the disciples take any actions?), conflict (who should feed the crowd?), and resolution (the crowd was taught and fed.) within the feeding story for the audience.

From a literary point of view, I have argued that although this feeding narrative is episodic in nature, it fits into the larger scheme of Mark's kerygmatic program of the gospel because it is a "kernel event," a crux that is crucial to the structure and direction of narrative events that are to follow.²⁷³ It initiates a narrative block (6:30-8:21) dealing with the disciples' incomprehension in relation to the loaves and it foreshadows the second feeding story (8:1-10) and the Last Supper (14:22-24).

Combining Jesus' deeds with several OT allusions, the Markan narrator has successfully portrayed Jesus as a vivid and lively character who is the compassionate shepherd who teaches and feeds God's people in the wilderness. Through the deeds and teachings of Jesus, Mark has effectively connected (and compared) him with the great OT shepherds Moses (Num 27:17) and David (Ezek 34:5, 23). The audience receives a clear picture of Jesus as a God-sent shepherd who cares for and reorders "the scattered sheep" (the crowd) in the story. Mark's first feeding story not only recapitulated what the implied audience has already experienced thus far in Mark's gospel but also serves as an indicator of what they can expect in the future with regard to Jesus' commission. Jesus not only cares for his sheep as a good shepherd but even gives up his life for them (15:33-37).

To summarize, this dissertation has studied Mark's first feeding story using redaction-criticism in the service of a primarily narrative-critical method. It has shown

²⁷³ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 53.

that Mark has reworked his sources to achieve his literary and theological goals. He has intentionally alluded to the OT when writing his first feeding story to portray Jesus as a God-sent shepherd who cares for his sheep. Mark's first feeding story not only demonstrated Jesus' power and his compassion but also displayed the incomprehension and lack of faith of the disciples. It was argued that the author of Mark was familiar with a miraculous feeding narrative type-scene from the OT Elijah-Elisha narrative cycle and modeled his feeding story after it. Mark's first feeding narrative not only prepares the audience for the celebration of the Last Supper but also points to the eschatological banquet at the messianic age.

II. Contributions to the Interpretation of Mark 6:30-44

This dissertation has employed the narrative-critical method in a more comprehensive way than previously to interpret Mark's first feeding story (6:30-44). It fulfills a need for a close reading of the text and a full-scale study of the narrative elements of Mark's first feeding story and how the implied audience responded to them. By applying the narrative-critical method to study the story of the feeding of the five thousand, this study has made several significant contributions to the interpretation of Mark's first feeding story:

First, this dissertation has studied the OT allusions in Mark's first feeding narrative from literary perspectives. It has analyzed the rhetorical effect of Mark's first feeding narrative on the implied audience and how they have responded to Mark's use of OT images that portray Jesus as the shepherd who teaches and feeds his flock in the wilderness.

Second, although the parallel between Mark's first feeding narrative and Elisha's miracle story of the multiplied loaves in 2 Kgs 4:42-44 is generally recognized, no study of Mark's narrative has applied the type-scene concept to explain their relationship. This dissertation has shown that Mark is familiar with a miraculous feeding narrative type-scene from the OT Elijah-Elisha narrative cycle and modeled his feeding story after it when writing his own miraculous feeding narrative.

Third, as a literary unit, Mark's first feeding story has two key functions within the Gospel of Mark: (1) it foreshadows the second feeding story (8:1-10) and the Last Supper (14:22-24); and (2) it acts as a kernel event that is crucial to the narrative block of the disciples' misunderstanding relating to the loaves (6:30-8:21). Thus it occupies an important position in Mark's gospel.

Fourth, this dissertation contributes to the study/understanding of narrative Christology. The traditional titular approach to Markan Christology usually focuses on certain titles such as "the Son of God" and "the Son of Man" used in the gospel. It tends to draw on information outside the Markan narrative and attempts to search the historical usage and meaning of these titles in their original historical contexts like Judaism and Hellenism and then see how they apply to Jesus and are used in Mark's gospel.²⁷⁴ Since Mark's Christology is embedded in his narrative, "we need to take seriously the narrative

²⁷⁴ See the classic works of Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), and Ferdinand Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology: Their History in Early Christianity* (LTT. Trans. Harold Knight and George Ogg. Cambridge: Lutterworth, 1969).

form of Mark in discussing this Gospel's presentation of Jesus Christ."²⁷⁵ This study has shown that Mark's narrative (1:1-6:44) converges on the image of Jesus the Shepherd naturally in his first feeding story and at the same time provides the audience conveniently with a title "the shepherd" that summarizes these stories that reveal who Jesus is (6:34). Although Mark does not develop explicitly a shepherd Christology in the traditional titular sense, the analysis of Mark's narrative of Jesus' deeds suggests that he is the *de facto* shepherd king who cares for his people. As the true shepherd king, Jesus stands in contrast to the religious leaders and Herod (2:16; 2:23-3:6; 6:14-28). Thus Mark's first feeding story recapitulates Jesus' teaching and deeds to show that he is the God-sent compassionate shepherd who seeks, gathers, and tends for his sheep.

In summary, this dissertation is the first to present a full-scale narrative-critical and audience-oriented study of the literary elements of Mark's first feeding story and its meaning and function within the Gospel of Mark. It has employed the type-scene concept to explain the relationship between Mark 6:30-44 and 2 Kgs 4:42-44. It has contributed to our understanding of the literary functions of Mark's first feeding story to the Gospel of Mark as a whole. It also contributed to the understanding of the narrative Christology that Jesus is a God-sent eschatological shepherd who tends for and reorders "the scattered sheep" (the crowd) literally in the wilderness.

²⁷⁵ Tannehill, "The Gospel of Mark as Narrative Christology," 57. For a full discussion of narrative Christology, see Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *Mark's Jesus: Characterization as Narrative Christology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009).

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