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THE MOTIF OF HEARING AND SEEING IN MARK 4-8:

CONTRIBUTIONS TO A MISSIONAL READING OF THE SECOND GOSPEL

By

JONATHAN P. COODY

A THESIS SUBMITTED
TO THE FACULTY OF
COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF THEOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the development of the motif of hearing and seeing as it is presented by Mark in chapters 4-8 of his Gospel, with a view toward discerning the role of the motif in the overall narrative. In turn, the goal is to determine how the motif contributes to a missional reading of the Gospel. Thus, the primary question in focus is the following: What does the motif of hearing and seeing accomplish in its narrative role in chapters 4-8, and how does that contribute to a missional reading of the second Gospel?

Chapter one presents a discussion of both terminology and methodology relating to Christian mission and missional reading. A functional definition of mission is provided, one which serves as a foundational definition for how the term is used throughout the thesis, and one which then serves to provide a criterion by which a missional reading is judged. A description of missional reading is also provided in this chapter, along with an explanation of the theory of missional hermeneutics. It is claimed in this first chapter, though not fully substantiated (the rest of the thesis bears this out), that Mark is a missional document, and should be read as such.

Chapter two includes a study of the historical and cultural background of the concept of hearing and seeing as a means of figuratively describing spiritual understanding. Included in this study is a brief study of the primary terms for hearing and seeing (ἀκούω, ὁράω, βλέπω) and how they are used in Graeco-Roman and Jewish literature, as well as in the biblical record. Chapter two also demonstrates that hearing and seeing in Mark meets the criteria for the designation of literary motif. In conjunction

with this discussion, the placement of the motif in Mark is shown to be significant to the overall flow of the narrative.

Chapters three through five consist of a literary and exegetical analysis of the hearing and seeing motif as it is expressed in chapters 4-8 of the Gospel. It is shown in these chapters that the motif is strongly oriented toward the concept of hearing as it is presented in 4:1-34, with the focus being upon hearing the word of God spoken and embodied in Jesus. The other end of the narrative unit, 8:11-26, reveals a stronger emphasis upon seeing, that is, perceiving Jesus in his messianic identity and mission. The intervening passages (4:35-8:10) are shown to expand the meaning of the motif of hearing and seeing, particularly adding the notion of hardness of heart, which results from or accompanies faulty hearing and seeing.

Overall, the literary and exegetical analysis reveals that Mark, uniquely among the Synoptic evangelists, employs the hearing and seeing motif to communicate the need for would-be followers of Jesus to listen attentively to Jesus' words, pay close attention to his actions, and understand that in Jesus, God is at work in the world to establish his kingdom. True hearing and seeing consists in understanding the revelation of God in Jesus and responding in obedience, embodying the gospel in one's own life and in community with others, bearing fruit as a sign of the in-breaking of the kingdom in the present age.

Chapter six presents a synthesis of the study, combining what was presented in chapter one regarding mission and missional reading theory with the results of the exegetical and literary study of Mark 4-8. The rubric of locution/word, illocution/deed,

and perlocution/embodiment is presented as a way of describing the contributions of the hearing and seeing motif to a missional reading of Mark's Gospel.

In this chapter, it is shown that the motif helps to reveal the fact that Jesus' words and deeds, which reveal his identity and mission as Messiah, require an embodied response on the part of hearers/observers. An embodied response consists in fruitfulness in the life of the disciple and a dying to one's own self-rule and autonomy, in favor of the reign of God in Jesus. This embodied response on the part of both individual disciples and the community of disciples – the Church – reveals the kingdom to the surrounding world. In this way, it is not unlike Mark's portrayal of two competing visions of reality during Jesus' earthly ministry – the kingdom of men (and Satan), and the partially-hidden, but growing kingdom of God inaugurated in Jesus.

Fundamentally, the study of the hearing and seeing motif in Mark 4-8 reveals the missional aim of Mark as that of cultivating disciples who truly hear and see Jesus in his messianic identity and mission. In Mark, true hearing and seeing means that followers of Jesus are caught up in the missional purposes of God, witnessing to the victorious kingdom of God in both word and deed as they live out an embodied response to the gospel.

To my family – Tanya, Anna and Mark,

fellow heirs of the grace of life,

and partners with me, participating in the mission of God,

"Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." (Ps 95:7-8)

Посвящаю своей семье - Тане, Анне и Марку,

сонаследникам в благодатной жизни

и соработникам на Божьей ниве.

«О, если бы вы ныне послушали гласа Его:

'не ожесточите сердца вашего.» (Пс. 94:7-8)

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Quoting Augustine, John Calvin says in the introduction to his *Institutes*, "I count myself one of the number of those who write as they learn and learn as they write." This is certainly true for me in regard to this thesis. As such, it is appropriate to acknowledge those who have encouraged, enabled, and guided me in the learning process.

I would like to thank Dr. Hans Bayer, my advisor, teacher, mentor and friend, for his guidance throughout my time at Covenant Seminary, and of course for his invaluable support and guidance with this thesis. I also cherish his camaraderie on our trips to Ukraine. He has done more than to simply point me to the motif of hearing and seeing in the Gospel of Mark; he is a walking example of true hearing and seeing, demonstrating Markan discipleship in his humble dependence upon Christ. I also thank the professors of Covenant Seminary for teaching me to carefully and properly handle the Word of God, giving special attention to the covenant story of redemption.

Additionally, I would like to thank all of those who have supported our family throughout our time at Covenant Seminary. This thesis is in part dedicated to their participation in the mission of God through helping to equip us for our work in Russia. Special thanks goes to Arrow Heights Baptist Church in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, for their financial support and encouragement, and to Old Orchard Presbyterian Church in Webster Groves, Missouri, for their support, encouragement, and guidance during our time in St. Louis. I also thank Mrs. Helen Pierson for her gracious gifts to Covenant Seminary to fund the John C. Jacobsen Mission Scholarship Fund, which made our time of study at Covenant possible.

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*Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture citations are taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright 2001, by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BAGD	Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich & Danker. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (1979)
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
ESV	English Standard Version
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
LXX	Septuagint
MS(S)	Manuscript(s)
MT	Masoretic Text
NIBC	New International Bible Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIDNTT	C. Brown (ed.), *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 3 vols.
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	New International Version
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
SJTh	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
TDNT	G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* tr. G.W. Bromiley, 10 vols.
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

Introduction

"Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear!"[1] This summons to attentive hearing is spoken by Jesus in all three Synoptic Gospels, and is also found in Revelation.[2] The expression occurs twice in chapter 4 of Mark's Gospel (4:9; 23),[3] both instances being related to a call to "depth-listening"[4] to what Jesus has to say. The terminology of both hearing and seeing shows up in various ways throughout Mark's Gospel, and the notion functions to alert hearers/readers to pay attention not only to what is being said, but to what God is doing (and has done) in and through the person of Jesus. The purpose of this thesis is to discern the role which the motif of hearing and seeing plays in Mark's Gospel narrative, particularly as it is expressed most explicitly in chapters 4-8, with a view toward determining how the motif contributes to a missional reading of the second Gospel.

A number of scholars have noted the significance of chapters 4-8 for the overall narrative flow of Mark's Gospel. Elizabeth Malbon has recognized the "rhetorical

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[1] The NIV translation is used here due to the appropriate use of gender-neutral terminology. Though the Greek uses the masculine pronoun (ὃς) it is understood in context to be referring to everyone, which is not what the more literal translation of the ESV ("He who") implies. Jesus explicitly addresses a broad audience in Mark 7:14, where we find a similar summons to attentive listening. Moreover, Mark's Gospel clearly promotes the idea that the message which Jesus calls people to hear in Mark is for women as well as men (e.g. 7:24-30; 14:3-9; 15:41). Furthermore, the emphasis as the first line of this thesis is upon the general wording of the expression, and as an opening, it is intended to be inclusive for all readers.

[2] Noted by Klyne Snodgrass, "A Hermeneutics of Hearing Informed by the Parables with Special Reference to Mark 4," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 14.1 (2004): 63. (cf. Matt 11:15; 13:43; Mark 4:9,23; Luke 14:35; Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 13:9)

[3] A variant reading has the expression at 7:16 as well. See the exegetical discussion in chapter 4 for details.

[4] Snodgrass, "A Hermeneutics of Hearing," 63.

richness" of these chapters, especially as it is evident that Mark relates some of the same stories of Jesus' miracles and teaching as Matthew and Luke, but he does so in a unique way.[5] This thesis will show that the uniqueness of Mark's storytelling is found, in part, in the way in which he uses the hearing and seeing motif to tell these stories and thus, goad the reader/hearer of the Gospel toward response. It will be shown that hearing and seeing in Mark is a significant motif, and as such, it is unique among the Synoptic Gospels for its prevalence and role in the narrative.

Few scholars have focused specifically on the motif of hearing and seeing in Mark, particularly giving attention to the figurative sense of hearing and seeing as a way of describing spiritual perception. E.S. Johnson has done significant work on the motif, writing his dissertation on the topic – *The Theme of Blindness and Sight in the Gospel According to Mark* – at the University of St. Andrews in 1973. In his later article on the two-stage healing of the blind man (Mark 8:22-26), Johnson notes the significance of the theme and the uniqueness of Mark's use of it.[6] Additionally, Malbon has written substantially on the narrative of Mark 4-8, where she often mentions the motif of hearing and seeing as playing a unique and important role.[7] Klyne Snodgrass, in light of his interest in the parables of Jesus, has written on what he calls a "hermeneutics of hearing," a notion he partially bases upon the motif of hearing and seeing as it is expressed in Mark

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[5] Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "Narrative Criticism: How Does the Story Mean?," in *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, ed. Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 42.

[6] Cf. E.S. Johnson, "The Blind Man from Bethsaida," *New Testament Studies* 25 (April 1979): 370-83. Johnson's dissertation is not readily available, or apparently widely read, but his article is often quoted.

[7] Cf. especially, Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "Echoes and Foreshadowings in Mark 4-8: Reading and Rereading," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 112/2 (1993): 211-30. Also, Malbon, "How Does the Story Mean?"

4, particularly in the parable of the sower.[8] Joel Marcus, in his *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God* gives specific attention to the motif, focusing more (though not exclusively) upon the negative side of the motif by labeling it "looking without seeing, hearing without understanding."[9] In his commentary on Mark, Hans Bayer notes the contribution of the motif to the theme of discipleship.[10] Other commentators treat the motif as it arises in the text, but most do not specifically trace the development of the theme, except as it relates to unfolding what they see as the larger theme of discipleship.[11]

From the angle of discipleship, much has been written in regard to the notion of the disciples' incomprehension (or understanding) of Jesus' messianic identity and mission. Some see Mark as disparaging, or even discrediting the disciples (Apostles) for the purpose of asserting the authority of Mark's own Roman Church over against that of the Jerusalem Church.[12] This interpretation represents, in part, a decisively negative reading of the theme of the disciples' understanding, or lack thereof. As the exegetical analysis of this thesis will show, a negative reading is not entirely unwarranted; it serves an important purpose. However, others have demonstrated that the emphasis is not on a negative portrayal but rather on a positive discipleship function. William Telford has noted Tannehill's work as a careful analysis of the theme which shows the positive aspects of the narrative role of the disciples in Mark. He explains that Tannehill aptly

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[8] Cf. Snodgrass, "Hermeneutics of Hearing."

[9] Joel Marcus, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God*, Dissertation Series, Society of Biblical Literature, no. 90 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), cf. esp. his chapter, "The Parable Theory."

[10] Hans F. Bayer, *Das Evangelium des Markus* (Witten: SCM R. Brockhaus, 2008).

[11] Morna Hooker seems to give more attention to the motif than most, as does Joel Marcus, which is not surprising given his earlier treatment of the motif in his book cited above. Cf. Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark*, Black's New Testament Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993); Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8,* The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2000).

[12] Cf. J.B. Tyson, "The Blindness of the Disciples in Mark," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 80.3 (September 1961): 261-268.

demonstrates Mark's positive view of the disciples' call to follow Jesus, and what is more, the reader of the Gospel is urged to follow with them. He suggests that the end goal of such a narrative role is to bring the reader to a similar place of self-criticism in one's own inadequate responses to Jesus.[13]

In establishing the role which the motif of hearing and seeing plays in Mark 4-8, this thesis will seek to demonstrate that indeed, Mark's portrayal of the disciples has a positive end goal, and in particular, an end goal which is missional in nature. Thus, an important question for this thesis is – What does the hearing and seeing motif accomplish in its narrative role in Mark 4-8, which in turn contributes to a missional reading of Mark's Gospel?

The practice of what is being called "missional reading" in this thesis is fundamentally based upon what some scholars have termed missional hermeneutics. The concept will be defined and explored further in chapter 1, but it should be noted that the notion is still being developed, as scholars make contributions to its definition by further exploring "the ways in which missional vision leads us to new patterns of engagement with the biblical text."[14] Theologians and biblical scholars increasingly are recognizing the contributions of missiological thinking and how it may inform our interpretive principles and practice. For example, in a recent discussion regarding taking the difficult

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[13] William R. Telford, *Mark*, T&T Clark Study Guides (1995; reprint, London: T&T Clark, 2003), 110.

[14] George Hunsberger, "Proposals for a Missional Hermeneutic: Mapping the Conversation," The Gospel and Our Culture Network, http://www.gocn.org/resources/newsletters/2009/01/gospel-and-our-culture. While Hunsberger's article remains unpublished, it is quoted extensively by others in the conversation and held to be an accurate appraisal of the current state of the conversation on missional hermeneutics. In particular, Christopher Wright acknowledges his reliance upon Hunsberger in his recently published essay in Stanley N. Gundry and Gary T. Meadors, eds., *Four Views on Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009).

step "beyond the Bible" to faithful contextualization of the gospel message, theologian Kevin Vanhoozer laments the absence of a missiological perspective.[15]

Thus, it is in the spirit of "contribution" to a larger discussion that this thesis proposes a missional reading of Mark's Gospel, informed by the motif of hearing and seeing in chapters 4-8. By its very nature, missional reading is not something that may be accomplished definitively in isolation. An individual scholar writing a thesis on Mark may make a contribution to the conversation, but missional reading is more fully accomplished in community, in the various "hermeneutical spaces"[16] which comprise the church's missional existence in the world. Thus, this is one limitation of the study, but it should not discourage such a contribution to the broader discussion of the missional reading of Scripture.

In order to demonstrate a missional reading of Mark, it must first be established that Mark's Gospel is a missional document; that is, Mark had missional aims in writing. This basic assumption will be proposed and partially defended in chapter 1, but it will be further explored and substantiated throughout the rest of the thesis. It is hoped that the exegetical and literary analysis will bear this out, for we do not wish to proceed from the dubious position of making unfounded claims as to the intentions of the author of Mark and then seek to base our interpretation upon those claims. As it has been said,

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[15] Vanhoozer's comments are found in his essay, "Response to William J. Webb," in *Four Views on Moving Beyond*, 269.

[16] Michael Barram, one of the scholars involved in the discussion, borrows this terminology and concept from Latin American theologian, Pablo Richard. The first space is the academic space, which consists of seminaries and other institutions where the Bible is studied in a more academic fashion. The second space is the liturgy of the church. Here, "the celebration of the Word is done within the community, but this community follows the hermeneutic logic dictated by liturgical prescriptions" and perhaps traditions. The third space is the communitary space, where the primary interpreters are not professional academics nor clergy but laypeople. In particular, Barram advocates the inclusion in this space of the voices of "the poor, the rejected, the youth, women, indigenous natives," whatever group of people whose voice may not be heard in a particular cultural setting. Finally, all three spaces should work together in a given community and should not be in opposition to one another. Hunsberger, "Proposals for a Missional Hermeneutic," 11.

"intentionality of a document is not the basis of interpretation, but the result."[17] Thus, the claims made in chapter 1 as to the missional nature of Mark's Gospel, as well as the missional aims of Mark as author,[18] will not be without supporting evidence, but the claim will be tested by the exegetical and literary analysis of Mark 4-8 which follows.

In short, a missional reading, as it is proposed in this thesis, is not simply a study of "mission in Mark,"[19] where one might search for texts which support a Christian practice of missions, or where a study of Jesus and his disciples engaging in cross-cultural missions might lead us to derive principles for the practice of missions in our own day. Rather, what is being proposed here is a reading which demonstrates the missional nature of Mark's Gospel and his intent in writing, unfolding the contribution of Mark to the overall story of God's mission to redeem his people and renew his creation. It is an exercise in demonstrating that a missional reading leads to hitherto unexplored dimensions of the text, not an attempt at replacing all other legitimate readings of Mark. The goal is a more robust view of mission and the missional intentions of God through his Word, as related to us through Mark and his Gospel.

Chapters 2-5 will deal with the exegesis and literary analysis of Mark 4-8. This will not be a purely exegetical study, since the point of this thesis is an understanding of the motif of hearing and seeing and how it contributes to a missional reading of Mark.

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[17] Edward W. Klink III, "Gospel Audience and Origin: The Current Debate," in *The Audience of the Gospels: The Origin and Function of the Gospels in Early Christianity*, Library of New Testament Studies, ed. Edward W. Klink III (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 11. Klink is paraphrasing Dwight N. Peterson, *The Origins of Mark: The Markan Community in Current Debate*, BIS 48 (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

[18] Questions as to the authorship of Mark's Gospel, along with related issues of provenance and dating, will be presented in chapter 1 as part of the discussion of Mark as a missional document.

[19] As it will be noted later, Mark's Gospel has historically been all but ignored in studies of this type, primarily because mission is erroneously thought to be less explicitly described in Mark. Nevertheless, most studies on mission in Mark take the approach described above.

What is needed, then, is not only an exegetical approach, but also a literary analysis of the passages which will help us to discern the rhetorical thrust of the motif.

By "literary analysis" we mean the practice of paying attention to plot development and the movement of Mark's narrative, especially by way of discourse analysis. Mark's Gospel should be viewed primarily as a narrative, not a systematic theological treatise with a clearly outlined linear argument. Therefore, it will be helpful to employ literary-critical[20] methods as a way of showing how Mark uses the motif of hearing and seeing to move his narrative forward and to drive home his message. Exegesis, then, will entail examining the details of the text which illuminate our understanding of how hearing and seeing is functioning within the narrative, particularly in chapters 4-8, but also as it relates to Mark's broader themes of Christology, the kingdom of God, and discipleship. This means that the exegesis will necessarily be selective in its treatment of issues which are pertinent to the motif of hearing and seeing.

Within these chapters (2-5), attention will be paid to issues such as Mark's placement of the motif in his narrative, the recapitulation of the notion of hearing and seeing in subsequent chapters following its more explicit introduction in chapter 4,[21] the employment of Jesus' Old Testament prophetic language, *parabeltheorie*, and miracles as parables. Though it will be obvious that the terms "hearing" and "seeing" play a

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[20] In using the term "literary critical," or "narrative criticism," I do not mean to suggest that I take an ahistorical stance to the text of Mark. That is, taking the text as it is, as narrative criticism does, does not always mean ignoring historical issues or denying the historicity of the Gospel account. The intention here is simply to make use of literary critical methods which help us to discern the message of a narrative text, especially in relation to plot development.

[21] What will be shown is that the motif finds explicit expression beginning most obviously at 4:3, though elements of the theme develop before this point in the narrative. Hence, the focus of this thesis on chapters 4-8.

significant role in establishing the motif, a full word study will not be needed;[22] however, a discussion of lexical and background issues related to both literal and figurative hearing and seeing will be offered in chapter 2 before progressing to analysis of the passages. Necessarily there will be some attention given in the following chapters to what these terms mean in their context and to how they function in the narrative.

Additionally, it should be noted that studying the motif of hearing and seeing in Mark 4-8 does not in every case necessitate a study of the terms themselves. This means that some attention will be paid to portions of the narrative (particularly 4:35-8:10), where the precise terms for hearing and seeing (ἀκούω, ὁράω) are less prevalent. Thus, this is not a lexical study of the terms for hearing and seeing (e.g. ἀκούω, ὁράω, βλέπω). Rather, it is a study of the motif.[23]

The exegetical and literary analysis in chapters 2-5 will not venture to suggest explicitly how the motif of hearing and seeing provides a key to a missional reading of Mark 4-8. Rather, this will be shown forth more clearly in chapter 6, as the focus there will be upon synthesis of the material and drawing connections between missional reading theory, as presented in chapter 1, and the exegetical and literary analysis of chapters 2-5. Thus, the aim of chapter 6 will be to draw out the missional thrust of Mark 4-8 as it is expressed through the hearing and seeing motif in those chapters of Mark's Gospel. Implications for a missional reading of Mark's Gospel as a whole will also be considered.

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[22] The reader is directed to the thorough studies of Wilhelm Michaelis, "ὁράω" in *TDNT*, vol. V, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967): 315-82; Wilhelm Mundle, "Hear, Obey (ἀκούω)," in *NIDNTT*, 177-78; and Gerhard Kittel, "ἀκούω" in *TDNT*, vol. I, ed. Gerhard Kittel, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964): 216-25.

[23] It is understood that βλέπω is in the ὁράω group, but it will be helpful to distinguish it separately as ὁράω can be too broad at some points. More will be explained in subsequent chapters about how the motif is expressed with different terminology.

By way of scope and limitation, this thesis will not present an exhaustive study of the motif of hearing and seeing in Mark. To do that would require perhaps hundreds more pages on the nuances of the motif as it is expressed elsewhere in Mark, and even more detailed exegesis of chapters 4-8, especially chapter 4. What is attempted here is a study which will be thorough enough to provide an adequate understanding of the narrative role of the motif and its contributions to a missional reading of the Gospel. Included will be a few comments on how the motif sets up the trajectory of the narrative toward the cross, thus carrying the motif onward, but the comments will not be exhaustive or detailed.

Chapter 1: Defining Mission and Missional Reading

A Functional Definition of Mission

The idea of Christian mission is broad and encompasses numerous facets, many of which are not always agreed upon by those in the field of missiology. For the purposes of this thesis, however, a definition sufficient for the ensuing study will suffice, and while not exhaustive, it will be important for guiding what is meant by a missional reading of Mark. As Michael Goheen has said, "Differing views of mission will issue in differing missional readings of Scripture."[24] Thus, before proceeding to analyze the contribution of the hearing and seeing motif to a missional reading of Mark, a working definition of mission will be discussed, along with what is meant by missional reading.

An important distinction in the study of Christian mission is that between the task of the church and that of the *missio Dei*, that is, the mission of God. A biblically informed understanding of mission starts with the realization that it is, first of all, God's mission to redeem what he created. As Goheen asserts, "God's mission is theologically prior to any talk about the mission of God's people."[25] On the other hand, what is commonly labeled mission or missions in the world today refers to the church's participation in the *missio Dei*. Christopher Wright offers a careful biblical definition of mission that weds these two facets together: "Fundamentally, our mission (if it is biblically informed and validated)

[24] Michael Goheen, "A Critical Examination of David Bosch's Missional Reading of Luke," in *Reading Luke: Interpretation, Reflection, Formation,* Scripture and Hermeneutics Series, ed. Craig Bartholomew et al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 251.

[25] Ibid., 231.

means our committed participation as God's people, at God's invitation and command, in God's own mission within the history of God's world for the redemption of God's creation."[26]

Another way of speaking about missions begins with drawing upon the Latin term (*mitto*) from which our English word "mission" derives and then centering the discussion on what the Bible says about sending. Wright explains that he has no interest in expounding upon these ideas, for most of them have to do with searching out Bible texts which speak of the sending of the church. However, if the *missio Dei* is to provide a rubric for a biblical understanding of mission, the sending of the Son into the world and the sending of the church are not so easily separated. According to missiologist David Bosch, "the classical doctrine on the *missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit [includes] yet another 'movement': Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world."[27]

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[26] Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative,* (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 22-23. The importance of our participation in the mission of God is crucial to note, over against the way some have used the term *missio Dei.* The concept of the *missio Dei* was, in a sense, hijacked by the ecumenical movement in North America, where the priority of God's mission and his initiative was taken to an extreme and used to promote the idea, according to Aring, that "God articulates himself, without any need of assisting him through our missionary efforts in this respect...[and] the reconciled world of God... does not stand in any need of the missionary contribution of Christians." David Bosch *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission.* 5th printing, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992),393.

Bosch rightly seeks to recover the original intent of the *missio Dei* concept, while standing clearly against a universalist and passive understanding of the application of the concept as articulated by Aring and others. For the purposes of this thesis, the *missio Dei* will be spoken of solely as the grounds by which we understand God to be the initiator of mission, such that we agree with the words of Bosch, "that the *missio Dei* notion has helped to articulate the conviction that neither the church nor any other human agent can ever be considered the author or bearer of mission." Furthermore, we understand, with Bosch, that "mission is, primarily and ultimately, the work of the Triune God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, for the sake of the world, a ministry in which the church is privileged to participate." Ibid., 392.

[27] Bosch, 390. Bosch notes that the idea of the *missio Dei* as the proper missiological paradigm for modern missions "first surfaced clearly" at the Willingen Conference of the IMC in 1952, though the term itself did not originate there. There is conflicting evidence as to who actually fit the label to these ideas. L. Pachau suggests that Karl Hartenstein was perhaps the first to employ the term *missio Dei* beginning in the early 1930's. See his article, "*Missio Dei,*" in ed. John Corrie, Samuel Escobar, and

In terms of the New Testament, it is in the Gospels that we see the fullness of this expanded Trinitarian view of mission most clearly. For in the Gospels we have the incarnation, the Trinitarian mission of the sending of the Son. In addition, the Gospels, in varying ways, work out the meaning and implications of the incarnation throughout, culminating with either explicit or implicit sending of God's people. Often, Gospels are judged on their mission content based solely upon the latter half of this equation, so that Matthew stands out as the clearest exemplar of a Gospel which teaches something about mission, since we find what is called the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20. However, if we begin first with the classical understanding of the incarnation and allow that to inform our view of mission, we will see that all four Gospel writers provide ample teaching on mission, and specifically what we are calling the *missio Dei*. The point is that the incarnation of Jesus Christ as the One sent by the Father into the world to carry on his mission of redemption is a foundational truth regarding mission and how we should view mission. If we do not get this right, our ideas of mission will be skewed. The Gospels, (and in the case of this thesis, Mark) are intent on revealing who Jesus is as the One sent by God the Father to inaugurate his kingdom, and we should not miss the significance of this message for our understanding of mission.

Bosch rightly observes that "one's theology of mission is always closely dependent on one's theology of salvation."[28] Thus, if mission is seen first as an outworking of or participation in the *missio Dei*, there is a myriad of activity in which the church may engage in order to be engaged properly in mission. Mission is not simply "the planting of churches or the saving of souls," Bosch says, "it has to be service to the

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Wilbert R. Shenk, *Dictionary of Mission Theology: Evangelical Foundations* (Nottingham, England: InterVarsity Press, 2007): 232-34.

[28] Bosch, 393.

missio Dei, representing God in and over against the world, pointing to God, holding up the God-child before the eyes of the world."[29] He continues, saying, "In its mission, the church witnesses to the fullness of the promise of God's reign and participates in the ongoing struggle between that reign and the powers of darkness and evil."[30] When our soteriology is robust and biblically informed, encompassing the fullness of God's plan of redemption, we come to the understanding that in mission, we are participating in nothing less than the redemptive renewal of God's creation and extending of his reign, even in our own hearts as he works to transform us and the world around us.

Though the idea of the *missio Dei* as a mission paradigm developed mostly during the 20th century among missiologists and theologians, these ideas do not necessarily originate in the 20th century. In the 4th century, Athanasius of Alexandria expressed a similar idea:

> "The first fact you must grasp is this: *the renewal of creation has been wrought by the Self-same Word Who made it in the beginning*. There is no inconsistency between creation and salvation; for the One Father has employed the same Agent for both works, effecting the salvation of the world through the same Word Who made it in the beginning."[31]

One of the implications of a theology or definition of mission which centers upon the idea of the *missio Dei* is that we come to understand that the church itself exists because of God's mission. God is a missionary God, and the people he has gathered to himself, now called his church, is a product of that redemptive action. Mission, then, begins with Trinitarian theology, and ecclesiology and the church's role in mission

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[29] Ibid., 391.

[30] Ibid., 391.

[31] Athanasius of Alexandria, *On the Incarnation*, trans. and edited by a Religious of C.S.M.V., (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), 1:§1.

follows.[32] Thus, Mark mentions in 3:13 that Jesus "called to him those he desired, and they came to him." In verse 14, he says that Jesus then "appointed twelve (whom he also named Apostles) *so that they might be with him* and he might send them out to preach."

Often, studies on mission in the Gospels focus solely upon the latter half of verse 14, looking for explicit references to the disciples being sent out to preach, following the "sending" idea from the Latin term for mission. This practice is not to be discouraged, nor is it inappropriate. However, a view of God's mission as theologically prior to the church's participation in his mission encourages us to see that the first half of Mark 3:14 shows us how God is concerned with the formation of a missional community who will be his representatives and bearers of his mission in the world. Mark develops this notion through his theme of discipleship throughout the Gospel. It seems that in part, overlooking this fact has led to Mark's Gospel being neglected in the area of missions studies. For in Mark's account, there are not many episodes of sending or crossing cultural boundaries to reach out to Gentiles, though the actual presence of this has been vastly overlooked.[33] This phenomenon has led Donald Senior to conclude: "In contemporary Synoptic studies the role of mission is more neglected in the case of Mark than it is in Matthew or Luke-Acts."[34]

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[32] Bosch, 393.

[33] Much of the neglect is due to the fierce application of redaction and form criticism, writing off statements regarding a worldwide mission as later additions (cf. Mark 13:10; 14:9). Senior and Stuhlmueller offer ample evidence of a worldwide mission in Mark. See their chapter on mission in Mark in Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983).

[34] Donald Senior, "The Struggle to be Universal: Mission as Vantage Point for New Testament Investigation," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 46 (1984): 66. A few studies on mission in Mark have surfaced since Senior's 1984 statement, but not many. A sampling includes Andreas Koestenberger and Peter T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, ed. Donald A. Carson, vol. 11 (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001); William J. Larkin Jr. and Joel F. Williams, eds., *Mission in the New Testament: An Evangelical Approach*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998); Nissen, Johannes. *New Testament and Mission: Historical and Hermeneutical Perspectives* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999).

So much discussion of the priority of the mission of God is not meant to downplay the role of the church, but rather to gain proper moorings for our study. Grounded as it is in the incarnation and the mission of God, the church's mission means participating in God's mission by engaging with the world, often cross-culturally and even beyond geographical and political borders, bringing the full message of the gospel of Jesus Christ to bear on hard hearts, broken societies, and everything else ravaged by the effects of sin.

Missional Reading

The Missional Nature of Scripture

Deriving from the word mission, the term missional has become widely used in the church as well as the academy. Wright offers a succinct definition of the term: "*Missional* is simply an adjective denoting something that is related to or characterized by mission, or has the qualities, attributes, or dynamics of mission."[35] By way of example, the term is often used by churches to express their desire to be intentionally missional by engaging in missions-related activities, though many scholars have sought to inform us that all churches should understand themselves to be inherently missional.[36] What the example of the missional church implies is that missional may denote an action that is missions-related, but it also may denote something that is inherently part of its make-up. In this latter sense, the idea is a dynamic, rather than static notion. The

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[35] Wright, *Mission of God*, 24. Wright's italics.

[36] Among others, see especially: Johannes Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church; A Survey of the Biblical Theology of Mission* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962); Darrell L. Guder, *The Incarnation and the Church's Witness* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2004); Darrell L. Guder and Lois Barrett, eds., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).

missional character of the church is a dynamic trait, much like DNA is to the make-up of a human being. So in this sense, Ott and Strauss are right to recognize that the term "'*missional*' focuses on the *doing* of mission,"[37] though this "doing" is not always readily observable, or it is sometimes something which simply characterizes the dynamic nature of an entitity or person in relation to God's mission.

Thus, "missional reading" assumes both sides of this equation. It implies that there is something missional about *how* the Bible is read, while it also implies something about the *what* of the Bible. That is, the nature of Scripture is that it is inherently missional. In terms of the missional nature of Scripture, it may be helpful first to discuss the nature of theology and how it is written or communicated, for the Gospel writers were those who did not simply record historical facts, but their arrangement of those facts and inclusion and exclusion of others show that they are also theologians and missionaries attempting to relate the good news of Jesus Christ and his life, death and resurrection to real people in a certain language, place, culture and time. This includes Mark and his Gospel account.

As God's people bring the gospel to bear on the surrounding world, there are decisions to be made regarding how to do that, not only functionally, but also theologically and linguistically. That is, God's missional purposes must be communicated, even translated[38] and brought to bear on real people encountering real problems in the world. Martin Kahler has suggested that "mission is the 'mother of

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[37] Craig Ott and Stephen J. Strauss, with Timothy C. Tennent, *Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), xviii.

[38] On the missionary nature of theology, and specifically the idea of translation of the gospel into vernacular concepts and language, see Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, (1989; revised and expanded edition, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009).

theology' [because] the New Testament record is the product of a missionary encounter between the early church and the world."[39] Kahler is calling attention to the fact that in a basic sense, all theology is mission theology, for it is formulated in historical contexts to address particular issues regarding the application of the redemptive-historical acts of God.[40] In this view, not only are Paul's letters, addressed as they are to particular communities and particular problems in the context of a growing church, illustrative of missional theology, but the gospels as well are to be seen as missional in nature. Bosch, drawing upon Fiorenza, says: "The gospels, in particular, are to be viewed not as writings produced by an historical impulse but as expressions of an ardent faith, written with the purpose of commending Jesus Christ to the Mediterranean world."[41]

In light of the missional nature of theology and the concerns of the writers of Scripture to relate the gospel story to real people, those committed to the Bible's Divine inspiration also understand that the Divine Author was intent on revealing himself and relating to people through the writing of Scripture, and this, in its most fundamental sense, is the intention of a missionary God. Thus, just as the church owes its existence to the mission of God, so does Scripture. Wright asserts that "*the whole Bible itself is a missional phenomenon*...the product of and witness to the ultimate mission of God."[42]

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[39]Martin Kahler, *Schriften zur Christologie und Mission* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1971), 190 as interpreted and quoted by Michael Goheen, "David Bosch's Missional Reading of Luke," 237.

[40] This, however, should not lead us to the conclusion that theology formulated in particular contexts has no bearing on other times, places, people and cultures. For a fuller discussion on this issue, and a rebuttal to the postmodern error, see Wright's discussion in *Mission of God*, pages 38-47.

[41] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 16. Bosch is not suggesting that the Gospels are not intended as historical accounts. Rather, he is simply calling attention to the missionary nature of the impulse in composition and intention by the writers. On this, he also quotes Martin Hengel, stating, "the history and the theology of early Christianity are, first of all, 'mission history' and 'mission theology.'" Ibid., 15.

[42] Wright, *Mission of God*, 22. In his insightful survey of New Testament and mission theologies, Andreas Kostenberger criticizes Bosch's selective treatment of the New Testament (Luke-Acts and Paul), suggesting that Bosch has not sufficiently corroborated his assertion in chapter one of *Transforming Mission*, where he claims that the New Testament is a missional document. Whether Kostenberger's critique is fair or not, Wright's similar claim, expanded to include the Old Testament, is largely backed up

Wright continues by suggesting that mission is indeed what characterizes Scripture as a whole:

> The Bible renders to us the story of God's mission through God's people in their engagement with God's world for the sake of the whole of God's creation. The Bible is the drama of this God of purpose engaged in the mission of achieving that purpose universally, embracing past, present and future, Israel and the nations, 'life, the universe and everything,' and with its center, focus, climax, and completion in Jesus Christ. Mission is not just one of a list of things that the Bible happens to talk about, only a bit more urgently than some. Mission is, in that much-abused phrase, 'what it's all about.'[43]

A Missional Hermeneutic

A view of the Bible as a missional book, a book that is not only characterized by mission but also is itself a "missional phenomenon," leads us to ask a hermeneutical question – How should we then interpret the Bible? Biblical scholarship rightly advises interpreters to pay special attention to genre when seeking to interpret various biblical passages and books, and so Wright urges us to pay close attention to the overall genre of Scripture by attending to its missional nature. To be sure, Wright is not advocating ignoring traditional genre categories. Rather, Wright's point, as Michael Williams puts it, is that if we ignore the missional nature of Scripture in our reading, we have lost sight

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by his overwhelmingly thorough treatment of biblical texts throughout the canon. In the end, however, Wright and Bosch are not attempting to demonstrate where mission is explicitly talked about in the Bible. For them, mission is not simply a theme in the Bible.

Koestenberger's work on mission in the Bible is different in its very nature (cf. also Andreas Koestenberger and Peter T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*). While helpful, his work simply seeks to show how the Bible is concerned with mission in various ways and in various texts. For him, it is a central theme in Scripture, and perhaps a larger theme than most others, but not necessarily "what it's all about." This is not the same as Wright's or Bosch's work, nor is it what is being demonstrated in this thesis. For Koestenberger's critique, see his article, "The Place of Mission in New Testament Theology: An Attempt to Determine the Significance of Mission within the Scope of the New Testament's Message as a Whole," *Missiology* 27.3 (July 1999): 357.

[43] Ibid., 22.

of "how the Bible gives itself to be read," and reading it missionally is to read "with the grain" of Scripture.[44]

Wright is not alone regarding the nature of Scripture and how it should be read. There are certainly others who have previously spoken of this approach to Scripture[45] and more still who are joining Wright in advocating a missional approach to reading the Bible. Wright is one of many scholars promoting what is being called a missional hermeneutic. Wright's concerns are primarily focused upon reading Scripture in line with the overall purpose of the Bible as "the story of God's mission through God's people,"[46] but he is at the same time interested in exploring with others the broader contributions of missiology and missiologists to our understanding of Scripture.[47]

Another scholar involved in the missional hermeneutic discussion, Michael Barram, states that fundamentally, a missional hermeneutic is "an approach to the biblical text rooted in the basic conviction that God has a mission in the world and that we read Scripture as a community called into and caught up by those divine purposes."[48] The reason for this is the common assumption that, fundamentally, sharing the same

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[44] Michael D. Williams, "Theology as Witness: Reading Scripture in a New Era of Evangelical Thought – Part I: Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God*," *Presbyterion* 36:2 (Fall 2010): 76. Reading "with the grain" is Wright's phrase quoted by Williams.

[45] David Bosch, being not only a missiologist but also a biblical scholar, having completed his doctoral work under Oscar Cullmann, is just one of many who were engaged in this long before Wright and those who are advocating the idea of a missional hermeneutic. This new group of scholars, including Wright and Goheen, readily acknowledges Bosch and others for their pioneering work.

[46] Wright, *Mission of God*, 22. See above block quote.

[47] Hunsberger has discerned four "streams" of thought within the missional hermeneutics discussion, one being described this way: *The missional direction of the story: The framework for biblical interpretation is the story it tells of the mission of God and the formation of a community sent to participate in it.* This stream, Hunsberger suggests, provides the foundation for the other three and is most clearly exemplified by the thought of Wright, especially as he has written most prolifically on this view, especially in his book, *The Mission of God.* Thus, Wright is consistently drawn upon in this thesis, as his thought is foundational in this new era of study within what is being called a missional hermeneutic. Cf. Hunsberger, "Proposals for a Missional Hermeneutic."

[48] Michael Barram, "Located Questions for a Missional Hermeneutic," The Gospel and Our Culture Network, http://gocn.org/resources/articles/located-questions-missional-hermeneutic.

"location" with the biblical writer – that of being engaged in mission – leads to a richer reading of Scripture. Scripture should be read in the context of mission with what Goheen calls a "missionary self-understanding."[49] The idea is that if Scripture is inherently a missional text, written in the context of mission for missional purposes, the best vantage point from which to read Scripture is to read it within a missional context or frame of mind.

An objection may be made at this point that missional hermeneutics seems to advocate approaching Scripture with pre-conceived notions about the text, looking at it, as it were, with the colored lenses of mission and missional concerns.[50] By way of response, one of the positive critiques of postmodern thought for the field of biblical scholarship has been that of challenging our Western commitment to Enlightenment ideals. Biblical scholarship in the mold of the Enlightenment advocates what turns out to be no more than a hypothetical objective viewpoint for the interpreter of Scripture. That is, there is an expectation that the interpreter should shed all prejudices and viewpoints in order to rise above his/her cultural situation and approach the text "scientifically," observing the facts and coming to value-free conclusions. More recently, even Evangelical scholars have come to recognize the absurdity of the idea of completely

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[49] Goheen, "David Bosch's Missional Reading of Luke," 232.

[50] Many Evangelicals who fear opening the door to what might be called prejudiced reading understandably fear what has often come out from behind that open door – liberation theology, feminist theology, etc. Wright calls these "advocacy" readings, which are centered on the idea of liberation. He makes no apology for missional reading falling into that category. The difference, he suggests, is that if liberationist readings are suspect, they may be called back to a biblical understanding through a missional reading, which is the ultimate liberationist reading, for "where else does the passion for justice and liberation that breathes in these various theologies come from if not from the biblical revelation of the God who battles with injustice, oppression and bondage throughout history right to the eschaton...where else, in other words, but from the mission of God?" Wright, *Mission of God*, 44.

escaping our prejudices and viewpoints.[51] Rather, at some level, we should accept that our own location, and what Gadamer has called our "anticipatory fore-structures or 'prejudices,'" in various ways "orient our interpretation."[52] Goheen quotes Lash as putting it this way:

> If the questions to which ancient authors sought to respond in terms available to them within their cultural horizons are to be 'heard' today with something like their original force and urgency, they have first to be 'heard' as questions that challenge us with comparable seriousness. And if they are to be thus heard, they must first be articulated in terms available to us within our cultural horizons. There is thus a sense in which the articulation of what the text might 'mean' today, is a necessary condition of hearing what that text 'originally meant.'[53]

Wright accepts this epistemological and hermeneutical framework as not only an acceptance of reality, but even as advantageous toward a more faithful reading of Scripture. Allowing for the reality of our own perspectives opens the door to reading the Bible in community with others, fostering a world-wide, cross-cultural hermeneutical community, in which we inform each other and seek together, with other followers of Christ, more faithful readings of Scripture.

Additionally, Wright responds to objections to a missional hermeneutic as an "interested" reading by appealing to the nature of the text itself and to the idea that to

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[51] What is assumed here, though there is not sufficient room in this thesis to fully describe, is the epistemological stance of "critical realism." One prominent American Evangelical New Testament scholar has made a public plea for the adoption of critical realism as a way forward in biblical studies, though he perhaps prefers to be called a "chastened foundationalist." See the first chapter of Darrell Bock, *A Purpose-Directed Theology: Getting Our Priorities Right in Evangelical Controversies* (InterVarsity Press, 2002). For a succinct explanation of what is being assumed in this thesis in regards to critical realism as it pertains to biblical studies, see chapter two, "Knowledge: Problems and Varieties," in N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992). Here, and throughout his book, Wright speaks in terms of worldview, where the interpreter should seek to understand the worldview of the biblical authors, while not seeking to escape his own, since this would be impossible. So the idea is not to read Scripture simply from one's own standpoint (the postmodernist error), but rather seeking as much as possible to understand where the biblical writer, as a prophetic voice of God, stood philosophically, culturally, and historically, while acknowledging one's own limitations as an outsider.

[52] Ibid., 232.

[53] Nicholas Lash, "What Might Martyrdom Mean?, *Ex Auditu* 1 (1985), 17-18 quoted in Goheen, 232.

read the Bible as it asks to be read is to join Scripture and its writers in a commitment to God's own purposes. A rationalist, so-called objective reading of Scripture, can lead to an un-attached reading which does not foster commitment to what the author, through the text, is calling forth in readers.[54] Rather than labeling missional hermeneutics as an interested reading, it might be better to call it a committed reading. A missional reading is committed not only to accepting the Bible on its own terms, reading it as it asks to be read, but also standing, even living, within its missional story by engaging in mission as a fundamental mindset for life as one reads Scripture from that location.

Thus, a missional hermeneutic demands what Scripture demands of its readers – an acknowledgement that the God of history is on a mission, and all human beings are caught up in that one story in one way or another. We cannot step out of that story, for to do so would be to attempt to step out of history itself, for Scripture relates a story that is essentially historical. On this point, Koestenberger rightly urges interpreters to recognize that "a salvation-historical approach is imperative for an accurate understanding of the Bible's own teaching on mission."[55] In missional reading, contemporary biblical scholars such as Wright and Koestenberger follow in a long line of scholarship in the salvation-historical tradition. Herman Ridderbos, for example, states that Scripture is "a product of God's revelatory activity in the history of redemption."[56] Viewed in this way, Scripture relates a unified historical storyline of God's redemptive actions in history, one which implicates its readers as those who are called to live within the same storyline of creation

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[54] Kevin Vanhoozer makes this point and argues for it convincingly and exhaustively in, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 30-32 *et passim.*

[55] Koestenberger, "The Place of Mission in New Testament Theology," 359.

[56] Hermann Ridderbos, *Redemptive History and the New Testament Scriptures*, 2nd rev. ed. (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1988), ix.

and re-creation.[57] As Wright says, a missional hermeneutic "reads the Bible and develops a biblical hermeneutic in the interests of those who have committed their own personal life story into the biblical story of God's purpose for the nations." A view of mission that takes seriously the intrinsic nature of mission as God's purpose, not as man's program, demands that commitment to God's mission be seen as the "normal stance of the whole church," and in this case, "a church that is governed by the Bible cannot evade the missional thrust of the God and the gospel revealed there."[58]

On a missional reading, the Bible is not intended as a text which merely reveals facts about God's redemptive acts in history. Reading and interpreting the Bible cannot be solely a theoretical, academic science; it must be lived, even embodied, because the nature of Scripture itself is that it calls for a response. This was modeled for us by Jesus himself, as he is "the unique and definitive embodiment of God's self-communicative act or 'Word.'" The church, then, is a "derivative embodiment."[59] To remain theoretical is fundamentally to misunderstand Scripture, and with some Protestant Pietists and Kantians, to keep Christianity in the realm of values and ideas, as opposed to concrete, redemptive action in history. A missional hermeneutic helps us to keep the dynamic of revelation and embodiment together, and this dynamic is key to a proper understanding of Christian mission, especially as it is expressed in the Gospel of Mark.

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[57] Koestenberger advises that in order to read the Bible canonically and missionally, one should not be forced into an extreme view of continuity, but rather recognize that while there may be some discontinuity, overall the Bible does relate the same story of the missionary God who is intent upon redeeming his creation. Wright gets fairly specific on many points, holding to more of a classical covenantal approach, but Koestenberger suggests that there is room for those who see more discontinuity, and yet hold to the continuity of the biblical story of redemption. Koestenberger, "The Place of Mission in New Testament Theology," 359-60.

[58] Wright, *Mission of God*, 44.

[59] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 440.

Mark As a Missional Text

The point was made earlier that if we are to hear what is being said in Scripture, it is wise to hear it from the standpoint of mission. For the present study, we must consider the provenance and authorship of the Gospel of Mark in order to establish the notion that Mark was indeed composed in a missional context with missional aims. Understanding the context within which the Gospel was written contributes to our understanding of its missional purpose.

Though scholars are far from unified on issues of authorship regarding the second Gospel, there is a fair amount of uniformity on dating and provenance, at least in more conservative, yet still broad, circles. It is often agreed that especially chapter 13, with its concern for the community in the midst of persecution, or impending persecution and/or tribulation, gives us clues as to the date and historical situation in which Mark was written. Hengel suggests that Mark was written in Rome around AD 69, just before the fall of Jerusalem and after the Neronian persecutions.[60] There are variations on this date, some slightly earlier, others slightly later, but in general, there is wide agreement that it was written just before or after 70 AD.[61] The question is unresolved as to whether the persecution or tribulation described in Mark 13 comes before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD or afterward. It is sufficient for our purposes, however, simply to note that Mark speaks of believers encountering persecution and/or tribulation.[62] However, noting this

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[60] Martin Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 30. Hengel takes Mark 13:2 to be Jesus' prediction of the destruction of the temple. Ibid., 14.

[61] So also Cranfield, Hooker, France (in general agreement), Schweizer, Marcus, et al. Stein, though sympathetic to these dates, is non-committal and highly doubts the significance of Mark 13 for determining a date. Cf. Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 12-15.

[62] See Lane's helpful discussion regarding the context of tribulation and persecution. William Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, NICNT, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974): 12-17.

concern of Mark's Gospel does not imply that Mark intended his Gospel to meet the needs of believers in *only* one specific time and place of persecution and tribulation.[63]

Early patristic evidence overwhelmingly supports the idea that a "Mark," the *hermeneutes* of Peter, "wrote down accurately as many things as he recalled from memory."[64] This matter has occupied volumes of debate and critique from critics, most of whom question the motives of Papias, suggesting that his comments were a way of supporting the authenticity and authority of the Gospel by appealing to the Apostolic influence of Peter.[65]

The view taken in this thesis is that John Mark, the traveling companion of Paul and Barnabas, and also of Peter, is the likely author of the Gospel of Mark. Moreover, in keeping with the tradition of the Early Church, as well as with much of modern scholarship, the Petrine flavor of the Gospel is believed to be due to the influence of the Apostle Peter himself.[66] However, Mark is not to be seen as simply a transcriber of

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[63] This is because the nature of the Gospels, as believed by the present author, in part following Bauckham, is that they were not intended first of all to meet only specific time or geographically-bound situations or needs. See the further discussion on audience in this section.

[64] Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 203. The quote is Bauckham's rendering of Papias's words as related by Eusebius.

[65] For an older, yet still respected, discussion on this topic and arguments in favor of the veracity of the patristic witnesses, see chapter 1 in Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark.* For an updated discussion and thorough defense of the patristic witnesses, Petrine influence, and probability of John Mark as author, see Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, esp. chapters 2, 7, and 9. While Bauckham allows for this notion that Papias is likely seeking to support the authenticity of Mark's account by appealing to Peter as the voice behind Mark's words, he also points out that Papias's aims do not necessarily disqualify his testimony on the influence of Peter behind the Gospel or the relationship that Mark and Peter shared. In any case, Bauckham proceeds to demonstrate convincingly the probability of Peter's influence and close relationship with Mark independently of Papias's testimony. See Bauckham's discussion on pages 235-38 of *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses.*

[66] Here we agree with Bauckham and Hengel that Peter's mention of Mark as "Mark, my son" in 1 Pet 5:13 demonstrates the close relationship that Peter and Mark shared, contra the assertion that the John Mark of the New Testament was not associated so closely with Peter, but rather with Paul and Barnabas almost exclusively. Hengel suggests further support for seeing the Petrine flavor and influence in Mark. He notes that the accounts of Peter in the Gospel of Mark are all significant to the overall narrative. That is, "Peter is...central in the three most important theological highpoints of the work." Hengel notes 1:16-39; 8:27-9:8; 14:26-72, the middle one being the most important, where Peter confesses Jesus as the Christ (cf.

Peter's teaching, but rather one who shaped the content according to his own authorial intent. As Bauckham concludes:

> Mark's Gospel is not mere transcript of Peter's teaching, nor is the Petrine perspective merely an undersigned survival of the way Peter told his stories. While it does correspond to features of Peter's oral narration, Mark has deliberately designed the Gospel in such a way that it incorporates and conveys this Petrine perspective...Not only has Mark carefully constructed the Petrine perspective; he has also integrated it into his overall concerns and aims in the Gospel so that it serves Mark's dominant focus on the identity of Jesus and the nature of discipleship...Mark is no less a real author creating his own Gospel out of the traditions he had from Peter.

As for the present thesis, it needs only to be recognized that Mark is one who travelled widely and participated in and witnessed firsthand the apostolic missionary work of Peter and others. In other words, Mark was immersed in the missional context of the Early Church and wrote from that social location. Thus, the Gospel was written in a missional context with presumably missional aims at a time when the Early Church was still forming an identity (especially in relation to Judaism) and wrestling with the meaning of Jesus' life, death and resurrection for themselves and their communities.

Richard Bauckham has argued convincingly that Mark and the other Gospel writers did not intend their accounts as addressed exclusively to specific communities or necessarily to specific situations, as one might understand of Paul's letters, for example. Rather, Bauckham suggests that the accounts were intended for a broad audience and for circulation among the believing communities of a worldwide Christian movement. There is, after all, a difference between writing *in* a particular context and writing *for* a particular context or community. This distinction, Bauckham urges, should be recognized and treated more carefully. Bauckham challenges the common view in

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also,14:29-31, 33, 37, 54, 66-72). Martin Hengel, *Saint Peter: The Underestimated Apostle*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 40.

scholarship which sees Gospels as addressed specifically to the communities of the author and their own situations, stating that the traditional view "seems to depend on a view of an early Christian community as a self-contained, self-sufficient, introverted group, having little contact with other Christian communities and little sense of participation in a worldwide Christian movement."[67]

Bauckham lays out six compelling reasons to see the Gospels as written for a broad audience: 1) Mobility and communication in the first-century Roman world were exceptionally high; 2) The evidence of early Christian literature (not least, the Gospels) is that the early Christian movement had a strong sense of itself as a worldwide movement; 3) Most of the Christian leaders of whom we know in the New Testament period moved around; 4) There was a continuing practice, from the time of Paul to the mid-second century, of the sending of letters from one church to another; 5) We have evidence for close contacts between churches in the period around or soon after the writing of the Gospels; and 6) The evidence for conflict and diversity in early Christianity supports the

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[67] Richard Bauckham, *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 30-31. This is the way I read Bauckham: that he still allows for a measure of reconstruction of the local circumstances which may have influenced the writer. However, while perhaps he allows for this, he does not explicitly treat the idea. Perhaps simply to make his point, he uses unequivocal statements to declare that such reconstructions are a dead-end. For example, he clearly states that any talk of Matthean, Markan or Lukan communities "should disappear from the terminology of Gospels scholarship." Ibid., 4. More recently, Craig Blomberg has sought to recover a *via media* on this issue, suggesting that, "The Gospels were written for specific communities but also in hopes that they would eventually reach as many Christians as possible." In drawing this conclusion, Blomberg states that allowing for references to original Gospel communities (particular communities) does not mean that redaction criticism "as usual" should be employed, a practice he suggests has led to scholars seeking to "tie every (or even most) of the substantive distinctives among Gospel parallels to a theological agenda connected with the first audience's distinctive circumstances." Craig Blomberg, "The Gospels for Specific Communities *and* All Christians," in Klink, *The Audience of the Gospels*, 133. This sort of via media approach is taken by Joel Marcus in his commentary (cf. *Mark,* 25-28), a view he chose to take following the publishing of Bauckham's book, and so a position he holds over against Bauckham. The approach in this study makes use of Bauckham's work to put the focus upon the universal nature of the Gospels, while the specific local issues are not as important for the purposes of this thesis.

picture of the early Christian movement as a network of communities in constant communication.[68]

Thus, we may conclude with Bauckham that the Gospels were written *in* the context of a worldwide Christian movement, but also *for* a worldwide Christian movement. That is, the Gospels were written within the context of a movement which was characterized by the propagation of the good news of Jesus Christ and the development of a world-wide community of Jesus-followers who would testify to the life, death and resurrection of the Christ. As it will be shown later, this community would propagate this message in word and deed and also embody the gospel as they lived under the rule of God in Christ. The Gospels themselves were one way of effecting this mission as they were passed around from community to community, being read, even audibly, by both believers and non-believers. However, just as important was that the message was being embodied in this worldwide movement of Christians.

On this view, it seems reasonable to suggest the missional character of the context within which Mark was writing. As for his missional aims in writing, that will be demonstrated more thoroughly in the remainder of this thesis, at least from the standpoint of how Mark is employing the hearing and seeing motif in chapters 4-8. However, two points should be made, which will affect how the text is approached and which will also point to Mark's missional aims in writing his Gospel.

First, N.T. Wright has drawn attention to what we might call the missional self-awareness of the Gospel writers, stating that "All [Synoptists] tell the story of Jesus, and especially that of his cross, not as an oddity, a one-off biography of strange doings, or a

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[68] Bauckham, *The Gospels for All Christians*, 32-44. What is presented here is a paraphrase of Bauckham's six points.

sudden irruption of divine power into history, but as the end of a much longer story, the story of Israel, which in turn is the focal point of the story of the creator and the world."[69] That is, they understand where they stand in the midst of God's own mission to redeem his people and to restore his creation. Not only are the Gospel writers aware that they stand in this stream of history, continuing it by relating the gospel story, they also understand that they are playing a role in this mission by calling people into the same cause of carrying on this mission of God. Wright explains:

> [the Synoptists] are telling this complex story, not simply for antiquarian or theological interest, but in such a way as to make it the foundation-story, the historical 'founding myth', for their communities, communities whose very existence depended on their being called by the same god to carry on the same story in its new phase. Their theological, practical and pastoral concerns came together in this: that they should announce, and integrate congregations into, the events which had taken place in recent memory concerning Jesus of Nazareth.[70]

Secondly, Senior and Stuhlmueller have drawn attention to the narrative character of the Gospel of Mark as pointing to Mark's missional aims. They suggest that Mark's narrative is a "*communication*, involving invitation and response."[71] Mark's narrative is not that of "detached analysis," but rather "an explosive revelation, a compelling invitation."[72] Perhaps one may also add what others have suggested regarding the oral nature of Mark's narrative, something which Joanna Dewey has demonstrated. On this view, the account is seen as an oral narrative put to writing. Dewey explains:

> The plot as well as the style is typical of oral composition. The structure does not build toward a linear climactic plot; the plot to kill Jesus is first introduced in Mark 3:6 but not picked up and developed until Mark 11, and it does not really get under way until Mark 14. Rather than linear plot development, the structure consists of repetitive patterns, series of three

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[69] Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 396.
[70] Ibid., 396-97.
[71] Senior and Stuhlmueller, *Biblical Foundations*, 214.
[72] Ibid., 214.

> parallel episodes, concentric structures, and chiastic structures. Such structures are characteristic of oral literatures, helping the performer, the audience, and new performers and audiences remember and transmit the material. From what we know of oral literature there is no reason why it could not have been composed and transmitted in oral form.[73]

Whether Mark's Gospel was indeed composed orally before being put to writing is ultimately left to postulating, but Dewey is right to recognize what Malbon has called "echoes and foreshadowings."[74] This will become important as the motif of hearing and seeing is examined in this thesis, for the repetition and overlapping of the motif suggest such a composition. If this is so, an oral form intended for broad audiences suggests further evidence of missional aims on the part of Mark, especially when one considers how an oral form aids both memory and transmission. In this way, the Gospel may have functioned missionally as a performed narrative intended to both aid the understanding of hearers and also clarify the truth of God's revelation in Christ.

For our purposes, what has been important to establish is that Mark's Gospel was written within a missional context with missional aims. Both of these points will find further support through an examination of Mark's use of the hearing and seeing motif in chapters 4-8 of his Gospel.

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[73] Joanna Dewey, "The Survival of Mark's Gospel: A Good Story?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123 (2004): 499, quoted by Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 233. As a commentator, France also welcomes the discussion regarding Mark as oral literature, as does Hooker. Cf. R.T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002); Morna Hooker, *The Gospel According to Mark*, Black's New Testament Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993).

[74] Cf. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "Echoes and Foreshadowings in Mark 4-8: Reading and Rereading." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 112/2 (1993): 211-30.

Chapter 2: Hearing and Seeing in Its Historical and Literary Context

Linguistic and Cultural Background for Hearing and Seeing

Throughout chapters 4-8 of Mark's Gospel, the three verbs denoting the sensory ideas of hearing and seeing are found to overlap and function together as a call for would-be followers of Jesus to listen/hear and see/perceive him and his message. It is a call for understanding through the sensory means of hearing and seeing (cf. esp. 4:12; 8:18).

The primary terms which alert us to Mark's motif of hearing and seeing are ἀκούω, ὁράω, and βλέπω. The verb denoting the notion of hearing, ἀκούω, occurs 26 times in chapters 4-8 (or 27, if ὑπακούω in 4:41 is included), out of a total of 44 occurrences in the Gospel of Mark. In chapter 4, we encounter ἀκούω 13 times (14 with 4:41). Thus, at least half of the occurrences of ἀκούω in Mark occur in chapters 4-8, most of them found in chapter 4.

The verb ὁράω, along with some related forms (primarily ἴδον), occurs 50 times in Mark, and 15 of those are found in Mark 4-8. When βλέπω is added, the notion of seeing is found 23 times in these chapters. What is in view in this study is Mark's use of these terms in more than simply a sensory way. That is, while Mark may use the terms for sensory perception, the terms often have an additional meaning referring to spiritual or intellectual (or internal) perception. Thus, for example, a mundane, literal use of ὁράω, such as in Mark 1:16 (εἶδεν Σίμωνα καὶ Ἀνδρέαν – he saw Simon and Andrew), is not what will concern our study, though at times a literal use may have an

additional figurative implication. In these cases, the figurative sense will be explained. However, the bulk of what concerns our study are statements such as the following, but not limited to the following:[75]

Mark 4:9 (similarly, 4:23, 33)

> ὃς ἔχει ὦτα **ἀκούειν ἀκουέτω**. – He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

Mark 4:12

> ἵνα **βλέποντες βλέπωσιν** καὶ μὴ **ἴδωσιν**,
> καὶ **ἀκούοντες ἀκούωσιν** καὶ μὴ συνιῶσιν,
> μήποτε ἐπιστρέψωσιν καὶ ἀφεθῇ αὐτοῖς.
>
> In order that seeing, they may see and not see (perceive),
> And hearing, they may hear and not understand,
> Lest they repent and be forgiven.

Mark 4:20

> **ἀκούουσιν** τὸν λόγον – they hear the word

Mark 8:18

> ὀφθαλμοὺς ἔχοντες οὐ **βλέπετε**
> καὶ ὦτα ἔχοντες οὐκ **ἀκούετε**;
> καὶ οὐ μνημονεύετε,
>
> Having eyes, do you not see,
> And having ears, do you not hear,
> And do you not understand?

In Mark 4:12 and 8:18, we find the biblical pattern of hearing and seeing clearly working together. That the terms are found in the same context as complementary notions denoting spiritual perception and understanding is not unusual in the ancient world. In ancient Greek literature, the term ὁράω is found to refer to "spiritual sight," or "to

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[75] These verses are the clearest representatives of what contribute to the hearing and seeing motif, but they are not the only verses which will be treated in this study, nor are they the only verses which support the motif.

perceive something."[76] Moreover, in terms of the idea of spiritual perception, Michaelis suggests that the sensory terms can function somewhat interchangeably such that "ὁράω can even be used for ἀκούω."[77] Thus, as the terms for hearing and seeing are often found functioning together in Mark, they also are found to be functioning either together or separately in ancient Greek literature to express ideas of spiritual perception or understanding.

As for the terms denoting sight (ὁράω, βλέπω), Mark, alluding to Isaiah and perhaps other sources, uses the two together in 4:12 and 8:18. Mark uses both to perpetuate his motif of hearing and seeing throughout chapters 4-8, but the complementary verbs are not always found together. While the two terms may seem to be used interchangeably, Michaelis notes that there is a distinct nuance differentiating the two in the NT, as well as in Greek and Jewish literature. With βλέπω there is a stronger emphasis on the function of the eye than in ὁράω, but again, the verb allows for the notion of "conceptual perception," even though the emphasis may be on the physical eye.[78] Moreover, in its relationship with the physical eye, Michaelis points out that in both the OT and NT, βλέπω is used to refer to the ability to see, over against blindness, something that is also evident in Mark 8 (cf. 8:18, 22-26). Thus, the verb may carry the notion of both physical and figurative seeing and blindness.[79]

Michaelis also notes that the Greek notion of spiritual perception, attained by seeing and expressed as seeing, is clearly extolled by Plato as "the ability to see as a gift

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[76] Michaelis, 316.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid., 317.
[79] Ibid., 324, 343.

of God and the source of philosophy."[80] Further, as a divine gift, the gift of seeing is the "'the eye of the soul'... which is better than ten thousand eyes, for with it alone is the truth perceived."[81]

Along with seeing, the Greeks used hearing as a way of speaking of spiritual perception or understanding. Often the notion of hearing, rather than seeing, is used together with knowing or understanding in Hellenistic Gnosticism, because in Gnosticism, "God is invisible by nature." However, the notions of hearing, seeing and knowing are also found to work together, as Michaelis explains: "Hearing mostly refers to listening to and following the instructions of the mystagogue. These prepare the way for ecstatic vision (hence the order: hearing and seeing)."[82] Though hearing does play a role in spiritual perception, it is seeing which takes prominence in Greek thought. As Kittel notes: "The monuments which have come down to us with pictures of religious acts also make it clear that the sacred moment of the mystery or cult is one of vision."[83]

As in Greek religious thought, hearing and seeing are found to denote spiritual perception in ancient Jewish religion as well. This is true in the OT as well as into the 2nd Temple period of Judaism. Kittel notes that the OT clearly favors hearing, the "decisive religious statement" being: "Hear the Word of the Lord!" (Is 1:10; Jer 2:4; Amos 7:16).[84] On the other hand, the "decisive accusation" in the OT "is that of failure or unwillingness to hear" (Jer 7:13; Hos 9:17).[85] The seeing of God himself is something dangerous in OT Israel (Gen 19:26; 32:31; Exod 3:6; Judg 6:23), or reserved for rare circumstances, such

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[80] Ibid., 321.
[81] Ibid., 322.
[82] Ibid., 323.
[83] Kittel, 225.
[84] Ibid., 218.
[85] Ibid.

as with Moses (Exod 33:11; Num 12:8) or Isaiah (Isa 6:5). For the most part, seeing God in the OT "is an eschatological event which takes place when Yahweh comes to Zion and men are no longer of unclean lips (Isa 60:1ff; Job 19:26f)."[86]

Rightly, Kittel observes that the way of righteousness in the OT is through hearing and obedience. He says, "Man is not righteous as he seeks to apprehend or perceive God by way of thought and vision, but as he hears the command of God and studies to observe it."[87] This is, in part, what is spelled out in the *Shema* ("Hear, O Israel"), particularly as it is expressed in Deuteronomy 6 and in the practice of the *Shema* as a daily confession. Kittel observes, "The three portions [of the *Shema*] to be heard (Deut 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Num 15:27-41) treat of the way in which God's commandments are to be observed."[88]

For the most part, Judaism in the 2nd Temple period does not depart from the basic idea of seeing in the OT. In particular, Michaelis notes that Rabbinic Judaism maintains the eschatological view of seeing God himself, expressing "abhorrence" of the idea of ecstatic visions of God. Moreover, in agreement with the OT, Rabbinic Judaism maintains a greater emphasis upon hearing.[89] However, in apocalyptic literature, the notion of seeing took on a new dimension with the idea of a seer who receives a revelation from an angel and interprets mysteries for the people.[90] One example is the

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[86] Ibid., 218. Michaelis concurs with this assessment, stating: "It is commensurate with the OT view of God that God reveals Himself with (relative) immediacy in what can be heard, but not in what can be seen." Michaelis, 330.

[87] Ibid., 218.

[88] Ibid., 219.

[89] Ibid., 339.

[90] N.T. Wright suggests that the Gospel of Mark should be read as "a new-style apocalypse," partially in the tradition of Jewish apocalyptic literature. In his view of apocalyptic, it is a genre "where mysteries are propounded and revealed, where secrets unavailable elsewhere find their paradoxical elaboration." Wright suggests that in Mark's apocalypse, Jesus, not an angel, is the revealer of the

Ethiopic Apocalypse of Enoch (*I Enoch*). In this book, Enoch, as a righteous man who did not taste death, is the seer, the interpreter of angelic mysteries for the elect of God.[91] While this type of ecstatic vision is not expressed in apocalyptic literature as a vision toward which the people should strive, it does represent a slight difference over against OT ideas of seeing God or spiritual realities.[92] Despite the thorny nature of apocalyptic literature, overall the view in Hebrew religion is that hearing takes prominence.

Thus, the scholarly consensus is that whereas seeing takes prominence in Greek religion, hearing takes prominence in Hebrew religion. David Chidester, who has studied hearing and seeing across a spectrum of religious thought, claims that this distinction between Greek and Hebrew cultures represents the historic view in scholarship. He quotes 19th century historian, Heinrich Graetz:

> To the pagan, the divine appears within nature as something observable to the eye. He becomes conscious of it as something seen. In contrast to the Jew who knows that the divine exists beyond, outside of, and prior to nature. God reveals Himself through a demonstration of His will, through the medium of the ear. The human subject becomes conscious of the divine through hearing and obeying. Paganism sees its god, Judaism hears Him; that is, it hears the commandments of His will.[93]

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mysteries, and that the listeners are those who "are not the great seers of old, but disciples who are to spend much of the rest of the story being told off for incomprehension."

Though Wright's theory is intriguing, and in some ways seems plausible, it remains just that, a theory. What makes this theory enticing is that unlike conventional understandings of Jewish apocalyptic, in Wright's understanding, "'apocalyptic' is a way of investing space-time events with their theological significance; it is actually a way of affirming, not denying, the vital importance of the present continuing space-time order, by denying that evil has the last word in it." See Wright's discussion of Mark's Gospel in *New Testament and the People of God*, 390-96.

[91] "And Enoch, the blessed and righteous man of the Lord, took up (his parable) while his eyes were open and he saw, and said, '(This is) a holy vision from the heavens which the angels showed me: and I heard from them everything and I understood." *I Enoch (Ethiopic Apocalypse)* 1:2, trans. E. Isaac, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, vol. 1, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1983).

[92] Michaelis notes that the vision in Gen 35 may be similar, where "in a vision an angel...lets the patriarch (Jacob) read (not see) his future." Michaelis, 339.

[93] Heinrich Graetz, as quoted in David Chidester, *Word and Light: Seeing, Hearing, and Religious Discourse*, (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992), xi.

In the biblical record, however, the distinction is not always so clear, nor is it so apparent that hearing is dominant. In the OT, as in the NT, hearing and seeing are often found working together. This seems to be the case in the first two chapters of Jeremiah, for example. Jeremiah says, "And the word of the LORD came to me saying, 'Jeremiah, what do you see?'" (1:11) In the ensuing verses, we read of the visions that God granted Jeremiah, in order for him to understand God's message for Israel, which Jeremiah was then to deliver to the people of Israel "in the hearing of Jerusalem." (2:4) Thus, we have seeing, hearing, and even understanding involved in this context.

The same combination of seeing, hearing, and understanding is also found in Deuteronomy 29:4 – "But to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear." This message to them, given through Moses, suggests that they have not truly 'seen' or understood the significance of what God has done for them ("You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt..." 29:2), nor do they understand why they are to apprehend these things; it is for their own good (29:9). They experienced the blessings the LORD provided as he led them 40 years in the wilderness (29:5), and he tells them that they will continue to experience his blessings if they would only "keep the words of this covenant and do them." (29:9) Thus, hearing and seeing are sometimes used to denote what we might call true hearing and seeing, or apprehension, which leads to understanding and obedience.

That true hearing and seeing demanded understanding and obedience is continued in the NT, especially as it is carried over from Isaiah 6:9 (cf. Matt 13:13ff.; Mark 4:12; 8:18, Luke 8:10; John 12:40; Acts 28:27; Rom 11:8). In the Isaianic sense, the "attitude which does not understand the word heard and will not accept it results eventually in

hardening."[94] Thus, there are repercussions for improper hearing and seeing, that is, hearing and seeing that do not lead to understanding and obedience.[95]

One important addition should be made to the discussion of hearing and seeing in Hebrew religion, and in the OT in particular. The assessment that in the OT seeing God himself is reserved for the eschaton may be true, but it should be noted that there is an important nuance to seeing God in the OT which seems to hold true in the NT as well. There is a certain seeing of God which is a call to see him as he is, as Israel's covenant God. That is, it is a call to perceive him correctly based upon who he is; it is to understand him as he presents himself.

As Kittel and Michaelis have observed, the notion of seeing in religious thought and language can carry the meaning of spiritual perception. It would be a mistake to understand spiritual perception as somehow being removed from one's experience of the concrete persons and actions, even phenomena, of real history. In a biblical sense, spiritual perception relies upon the revelation of God in the world and among the people he created. He is, in his essence, a personal God who acts in history, interacting with human beings.[96]

This idea is illustrated for us in Exodus 19:4-5, where we read that Yahweh says to his people: "You yourselves have *seen* (LXX- ὁράω; MT - ראה) what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed *obey* (LXX - ἀκούω; MT – שמע) my voice and keep my

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[94] Mundle, *NIDNTT*, 177-78.

[95] More will be said on the Isaiah 6 passage in the exegetical section dealing with Mark 4:12.

[96] Michaelis and Kittel both suggest this in their attention to the biblical pattern of observing God's actions, but they do not seem to focus upon the idea of seeing as perception and understanding of God himself through the mediums of hearing and seeing.

covenant...." The interplay between seeing and hearing is seen in these important verses to convey the idea that God calls his people to see his deeds, his redemptive actions on behalf of his people, and to hear his voice, that is, to obey and keep his commandments. In other words, in this context, hearing is certainly important, but seeing or perceiving God as the one who has acted on their behalf is the basis for why they should hear his voice and obey him.

Similarly, Kittel's observation on the *Shema* does not make reference to the way that Yahweh reveals himself. That is, Yahweh is not simply revealing ontological truths about himself in the proclamation of Deuteronomy 6:4 and then calling upon Israel to obey his commandments. Rather, the call is for God's people to recognize and to obey the God who has entered into a covenant relationship with them and their ancestors. In this sense, there is a hint of vision or perception inferred regarding all that God has done to enter into this relationship with his people.

Christopher Wright asserts that the NIV has the Hebrew of Deuteronomy 6:4 correct, rendering it: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one."[97] On this translation, Wright appropriately argues that the Hebrew word for "our God" (אֱלֹהֵינוּ) in the first half of the statement is "a qualifier, functioning like a relative clause: 'Yahweh, who is our God, this Yahweh is one.'"[98] He goes on to argue that most probably, the teaching here emphasizes Yahweh's singularity, in contrast to the gods of the nations surrounding Israel. Furthermore, he asserts, "The incontrovertible emphasis was that Yahweh (alone) was God in covenant relationship with Israel; that Yahweh had done

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[97] Christopher Wright, *Deuteronomy*, NIBC, vol. 4 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 95.

[98] Ibid.

what no other god had done or could do; that Yahweh was one, not many."[99] In this statement, we see the marriage of God's deeds and person, his redemptive action and his covenant commitment. The people of God are called to recognize God for what he has done and who he is. One may call this remembering or recalling rather than seeing, but the type of seeing that is in view here is not simply seeing with the eyes, but also perceiving with the mind and, of course, remembering. In Exodus 19, the language is explicitly referring to seeing; here we have an implicit reference to seeing. Both work to expand our view of the biblical idea of hearing and seeing God.

As for the NT notion of hearing and seeing, Michaelis notes that in the Gospel accounts when people see Jesus physically, there are no unique terms used "to emphasise the significance of the encounter." Thus, the emphasis is not upon seeing his person, but rather seeing his deeds. In Matthew 11:2-6, for example, when John the Baptist sends his disciples to ask Jesus whether he is "the one who is to come," that is, the Messiah, he answers telling them to report to John what they "hear and see" (ἀκούω, βλέπω).

Kittel explains one of the differences between OT and NT notions of hearing and seeing by suggesting that, "We must remember…that events themselves are now a Word in a very different sense from that of Judaism with its exclusive emphasis on teaching."[100] In other words, when Kittel stresses that the OT emphasis is on the hearing of the word, that same emphasis is clear in the NT, in part through the visible events of God's revelation in Jesus Christ and his ministry. Thus, the events themselves – namely the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ – become the word which Paul and the other

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[99] Ibid., 96-97.

[100] Kittel, 219. Though again, we see Kittel's understanding is perhaps skewed. The OT is not exclusively interested in hearing teaching only. The redemptive acts of God are to be recognized as the foundation of covenantal teaching and blessings. It is agreed, however, that the NT is perhaps even more explicit.

Apostles preach. This is no less true in the Gospels, as noted above in Jesus' response to John the Baptist's disciples. The summation is that God is at work revealing himself in Christ, and just as in the OT, a failure to see and hear this revelation is to miss the very word of God. In contrast to the Greek notion of seeing, then, the NT notion is not about attaining to ecstatic vision, but about observing God's revelation in Christ.

Another NT notion congruent with OT teaching is that seeing God himself is an eschatological event, yet the coming of that age seeps into the era of the NT, where the incarnated God himself is the one prophesying and preaching about the Kingdom. Kittel suggests that it is here in the NT, in the person of the incarnate God, Jesus Christ, that hearing and seeing are intermingled, and in this we see "the fundamental distinction of the situation depicted by the Evangelists both from pedagogic Judaism and also from prophecy with its reception and proclamation of the revelation of the Word."[101] He goes on to explain:

> Already in His earthly presence with its Word and work there has come the dawn of eschatology in which seeing has a place alongside hearing. Thus in the use of the verbs denoting the sense-process described there is reflected the Christian understanding of the revelation given in Jesus. The influence which here asserts itself as a new factor does not derive primarily from the motifs of Gnostic or Hellenistic philosophy, but from the eschatological understanding of the fact of Christ.[102]

In other words, the primary import of the uses of the verbs for hearing and seeing in the NT is that people are to hear and see the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Jesus reveals that he himself is that revelation of God, showing this in both his words and deeds. This is the essential aim of the Gospel writers, to reveal Jesus in both his words and his deeds. In doing this, they are attending to the issue of Jesus' identity and mission

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[101] Ibid., 220.
[102] Ibid.

as the one promised in the OT Scriptures. The content of the gospel preached by Paul and other later NT writers is based upon the totality of the Christ event. Not seeing (perceiving) or hearing Christ in his words and deeds, then, is a failure to understand God and his mission in the world through Christ.

Hearing and Seeing as "Motif"

In his study of the motif of wonder in Mark's Gospel, Timothy Dwyer appeals to the work of Thiessen regarding methodology and the nature of studying motifs. In the case of the motif of wonder, Thiessen suggests that the study of this motif "comprises all of the narrative elements which express astonishment."[103] Likewise, in the case of hearing and seeing in Mark, there are many narrative elements, including actions, miracles and other terms (e.g. οὖς, ὀφθαλμός, τυφλός, κωφός) which contribute to the motif of hearing and seeing as Mark develops it in chapters 4-8. In short, what will be shown are those elements of the narrative, linguistic or otherwise, which contribute to Mark's development of the motif of hearing and seeing.

As for the use of the term "motif," recognition of the suggested criteria by which an element in the text may be labeled a motif should be noted. In his study in Mark, Dwyer, relying on Freedman, suggests that certain criteria must be met in order for a narrative element to be properly deemed a "motif."[104] The ensuing exegetical and literary analysis in this thesis will further verify that hearing and seeing meet Freedman's

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[103] Timothy Dwyer, *The Motif of Wonder in the Gospel in Mark*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 128 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 11.

[104] Dwyer cites Freedman as follows: W. Freedman, "The Literary Motif: A Definition and Evaluation," *Novel* 4 (1971): 123-31.

criteria,[105] but for now, a few pointers to how those criteria may be met are offered along with an explanation of each criterion.

First, a primary criterion is that the proposed motif "should occur often enough to indicate that 'purposiveness rather than merely coincidence or necessity is at least occasionally responsible for their presence.'"[106] As for occurrences, the fact that ἀκούω shows up at least 13 times in chapter 4, and is repeated alongside ὁράω and βλέπω in chapter 8 (cf. esp. 8:18, 24), reveals that the motif is not only still in play in chapter 8, it has been repeated often throughout these chapters.[107]

'Purposiveness' seems to be evident when we encounter the healings of the deaf man (7:31-37) and the blind man (8:22-26) within the section where the hearing and seeing motif appears explicitly and repeatedly (chapters 4-8). It will also be postulated that, in a specific way, Jesus' calming of the storm (4:35-41) fits this criterion with the use of the verb ὑπακούω (ἀκούω) in verse 41.

A second primary criterion is that the proposed motif should "appear in contexts which are unlikely and do not demand references from the field of the motif."[108] The previous example of Jesus' calming of the sea may provide one example of a context where perhaps the motif (such as the use of the term ὑπακούω in 4:41) seems unlikely to have occurred if not for the sake of perpetuating the motif to drive home a particular point. Additionally, the explicit use of hearing and seeing language in 8:18, in Jesus' response to the disciples, while it is not forced, has a ring of peculiarity and thus,

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[105] Though further verification of the criteria for designating hearing and seeing as a motif will be a byproduct of the study, not the purpose of the study. Therefore, no further mention will be made of how hearing and seeing meets these criteria.

[106] Ibid., 18.

[107] See the statistics listed above for the number of occurrences.

[108] Ibid., 18.

intentionality. Further, chapter 8 shows signs of a Markan recapitulation of earlier notions and terms. Moreover, the presence of the motif in Mark 8, as a recapitulation of the content of Mark 4, stands out in relation to the parallel accounts of the parable of the soils/sower in Matthew and Luke (Matt 13; Luke 8).[109] In those contexts, the parable is presented along with the idea of hearing (and seeing in Matthew), but afterward, there is no recapitulation of the motif in later chapters or contexts as in Mark.

An additional sub-criterion is that the motif references occur in significant contexts. In other words, if the motif occurs "at climactic points in the narrative, it will have the greatest effect."[110] This certainly seems to be true of the presence of the hearing and seeing motif in chapter 4, a chapter which a keen literary scholar such as Elizabeth Malbon has noted as significant in the flow of Mark's narrative.[111] Moreover, the presence of the notion of hearing and seeing in chapter 8 leads up to a significant climactic point in the Gospel – that of Peter's confession of Christ (8:27-30), a confession which is particularly important in relation to Mark's development of the disciples' response to Jesus.

Though hearing and seeing may be designated a motif in Mark's Gospel, it still is in many ways subservient to the broader themes of Christology, the kingdom of God, and discipleship, themes which have been noted by the majority of Markan scholarship as controlling themes in the second gospel. In other words, the motif of hearing and seeing

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[109] Luke seems to follow the idea of hearing from 8:4 to 8:21 explicitly, and perhaps even to 8:25, if the account of the calming of the sea is included, as postulated in this thesis for Mark 4. Matthew includes the OT prophetic language (quotes), explicitly citing Isaiah (13:14-15). This includes the notion of seeing, something which is absent in the Lukan version.

[110] Ibid., 18.

[111] Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *Mark's Jesus: Characterization as Narrative Christology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 28, 30ff. Malbon sets 4:1-34 apart as central to Jesus' "authoritative teaching" and his "powerful words." Joel Marcus also sees the importance of chapter 4 in Mark, a chapter which prompted his dissertation and later book, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God.*

often functions to draw attention to these larger themes. Thus, in subsequent chapters of this thesis, which provide an exegetical examination of the pertinent passages, some attention will be given to explaining the relationship of the hearing and seeing motif to the themes of Christology, the kingdom of God, and discipleship. Primarily, however, the focus will be upon hearing and seeing as a significant motif driving the narrative of Mark 4-8.

The Placement of the Motif in the Narrative

For the sake of orientation, a simple outline of the book may be offered in order to gain a broad view of the flow of Mark's Gospel. Though it is agreed, along with many Markan scholars, that outlines of Mark are somewhat artificial impositions on a text that seems to defy outlines, it is helpful to propose outlines for specific purposes. That is, outlines of Mark are helpful for studying particular themes or motifs, or for highlighting particular movements of the narrative. Moreover, though Mark may very well have been composed originally as an aural, our study is focused upon a written text. What is offered for our purposes is a rather simple outline.

It may be noted first, with N.T. Wright, that Mark essentially has two sections: "eight chapters to explain who Jesus is, eight to explain that he is going to die."[112] Though this is perhaps a tongue-in-cheek oversimplification, it helps us to see the general movement of the plot. With deference to the difficulty of subdividing such a book further,

[112] Wright, *New Testament and the People of God*, 390.

however, we may adopt a slightly more sophisticated outline, a modification of Hooker's description of Mark's general structure:[113]

1:1-13 – Prologue

1:14-8:30 – Jesus' ministry of word and deed

- 1:14 – 3:12 – Jesus' ministry among the people
- 3:13 – 8:30 – Jesus' teaching and healing ministry with/among the disciples

8:31 – 10:52 – Jesus' predictions of suffering and the true meaning of discipleship

11:1 – 13:37 – Jesus in Jerusalem

14:1 – 15:47 – Jesus' Passion

16:1 – 8 – Epilogue: Jesus' Resurrection (witnesses)

(16:9-20) – Disputed ending (commission and ascension)

The sub-divisions noted within the section "Jesus' ministry of word and deed" (1:14-8:30) need further clarification. By the label "Jesus' ministry among the people," (1:14 – 3:12) it is not proposed that Jesus was not with his disciples, or that he was not interested in his disciples at this point. Jesus' first disciples are called beginning immediately in 1:16, and the narrative is replete with plural pronouns from there onward, showing that as Jesus travelled around ministering among people, he was with his disciples. For example, immediately after presenting the calling of the first disciples, Mark records that "*They went* (εἰσπορεύονται) into Capernaum" (1:21). Moreover, in 2:15-16, for example, Mark says that Jesus was eating *with his disciples*, as well as with "many tax collectors and sinners," and that, "there were many who followed him." However, it is not until 3:13-19 that we read of Jesus intentionally narrowing this group, calling to himself "those whom he desired" and commissioning them "so that they might

[113] Hooker's outline is actually much more detailed, but the proposed outline above is based on Hooker's general description of the content of Mark's Gospel. Cf. Hooker, *Mark*, 16.

be with him and he might send them out to preach." Furthermore, he gives them "authority to cast out demons" (v.15) What follows this commissioning, particularly in 4:1 to 8:30, is a new focus upon the disciples' response to Jesus and his teaching as those who are called to carry on the work of kingdom ministry in line with what they have observed previously as they traveled around Galilee with him as he ministered to people. In contrast, the earlier section of 1:14-3:12 emphasizes the response of those of a broad group of people other than the disciples.

As for the other bookend to this section, Peter's confession in 8:27-30 is often debated as belonging to this section or that of the following (8:31-10:52).[114] Mann, for example, has included it in the following section, whereas the view taken by this author is that it belongs as the climax of this particular section of the narrative. At the same time, however, it is recognized that Peter's confession also functions as a bridge into the next section, where the disciples are confronted with Jesus' predictions of suffering and the meaning of discipleship, a notion which further sheds light upon the disciples' incomprehension of Jesus and his Messianic identity.

Often, Mark's way of showing the response of people to Jesus, or demonstrating the challenge posed to people by Jesus in his words and deeds, is through the use of questions which center upon the question of Jesus' identity. As "a narrative in the pattern of an ancient *bios*,"[115] it should come as no surprise that the identity of Jesus is no small

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[114] The story of the two-stage healing (8:22-26) is also debated as belonging to this section or the next. Joel Marcus's commentary, for example, as the first volume of his commentary on Mark, ends at 8:21. In contrast, Guelich's volume 1 in the WBC series ends at 8:26, suggesting that he sees Peter's confession as beginning a new section. Lane includes Peter's confession in 6:14 – 8:30, following the geographical markers in Mark. France ends the prior section at 8:21, as he sees 8:11-21 as functioning as a summary of events thus far. 8:22 – 10:52 comprises what he calls "Act 2." Cf. France, 14.

[115] Kent Brower, "'Who Then is This?' Christological Questions in Mark 4:35-5:43," *Evangelical Quarterly* 81.4 (2009): 291-305. Here Brower cites Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004). That Mark and

concern in the Gospel of Mark. Jesus' momentous question, which he poses to his disciples who have been following and observing him from the start – "Who do people/you say that I am?" (8:27, 29) – is preceded first by Mark's statement in 1:1 regarding Jesus' identity: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." This Christological claim is followed by a host of questions from Jesus and others in the midst of his ministry. Beginning with questions from both demons and onlookers at the synagogue in 1:21-28, following Jesus' show of authoritative teaching and powerful acts (exorcising the demon), similar questions (including internal questioning; cf. 2:6,8) punctuate the ensuing narrative.

Questions such as, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (2:7), or "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" (2:16), point to Mark's concern not only to reveal who Jesus is, but also to challenge readers/hearers with the identity of Jesus and his mission. In light of the opening pronouncement in 1:1 regarding Jesus being the Son of God, hearers/readers of this Gospel account are invited to answer many of these questions with an affirmation that Jesus is the Son of God. So when we encounter the question of the disciples in 4:41, following Jesus' miracle of calming the sea - "Who then is this?" – "Mark's readers, with the prologue in their minds, are well equipped to spell out that answer."[116] The flow of questions revolving around Jesus' identity climaxes with the affirmation of the centurion at the cross following Jesus' death: "Truly this man was the Son of God!" (15:39).

Thus, Mark's questions – there are over one hundred questions in Mark's Gospel – function both narratively and rhetorically, working to advance the narrative, and at the

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the other Synoptics are after the pattern of ancient *βίος* seems to be the consensus position among scholars today.

[116] France, 225.

same time, they function "to engage us, the readers or hearers, to cause us to evaluate our responses in light of the disciples in the Gospels, and to help us reflect on Jesus and his ministry as the good news."[117] Questions, as noted above, are found in and around episodes of both Jesus' words and deeds, calling those around him, as well as readers/hearers to be confronted constantly with this concern of Mark to challenge people to hear and see Jesus for who he is.

Thus, Mark's questions often function in the narrative to alert us to an important corollary for our study: the interplay between Jesus' words and deeds and the notion of hearing and seeing. Michaelis states the following regarding the nature of the revelation of Jesus in the Gospels:

> For the eye-witness accounts what was to be seen, and what had to be described as visible, was the actions of Jesus, His deeds, encounters with Him. From the very first what was handed down included not merely His words but also His acts. *This is connected with the fact that both word and work, and hence both hearing and seeing, constitute the full historicity and totality of the event of revelation.*[118]

It was noted earlier that 1:14-8:30 may be taken generally as a section describing Jesus' ministry of word and deed. However, as it was also noted, there is a noticeable shift beginning in 3:13, where the disciples come into focus as those who are confronted directly with the identity of Jesus. Up to this point, the question of the identity of Jesus has been dealt with in the broad context of ministry among Jewish authorities, "all who were sick or oppressed by demons" (1:32), and even "tax collectors and sinners" (2:16). Moreover, from 1:14 to 3:12, questions regarding Jesus' identity have been posed by people (as well as demons) other than the disciples. Statements regarding Jesus' identity

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[117] Kathryn Vitalis Hoffman and Mark Vitalis Hoffman, "Question Marks and Turning Points: Following the Gospel of Mark to Surprising Places," *Word and World* 26.1 (Winter 2006): 69.

[118] Michaelis, 348. Emphasis added.

are likewise made by people (or beings, or the narrator) other than the Twelve. For example, the sub-section ending at 3:12 ends with one of the more notable pronouncements regarding Jesus' identity: "You are the Son of God" (cf. also 1:1,11; 8:29; 9:7; 14:61-62; 15:39).[119] Beginning with chapter 4 in particular, however, the Twelve will begin to ask more questions (4:10,[120] 38, 41; 5:31; 6:37, 51[121]; 8:4) just as Jesus also begins to ask questions of the disciples, questions which show his concern to challenge his disciples' own comprehension of him and his identity (cf. 4:13, 21, 30, 40; 5:30; 6:38; 8:17, 18, 19, 21, 23,[122] 27).

In 3:13, we read of Jesus assembling his disciples in order to commission them, and in 3:31-35, he defines his family as "Whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother" (v.35). In regard to the notion of Jesus' identity, and the questions which are used to challenge people in their understanding, the lens seems to narrow to those on the "inside," even while Jesus is surrounded by crowds who are hearing his teaching. In fact, the crowds are so large (συνάγεται πρὸς αὐτὸν ὄχλος πλεῖστος) that he is forced to use a boat as a pulpit in order to teach the large crowd situated on the shore of the lake (4:1). The crowds ("outsiders") will still play a role in this larger narrative in his teaching of the disciples (cf. 4:11), and are obviously present to hear the parable in 4:1-9, but the narrative brings a new focus to the disciples' comprehension of Jesus, particularly beginning in 4:1 as Jesus begins to address them and confront them with questions. It is within this narrative context that Mark's motif of hearing and seeing is primarily situated, and it will be shown that the motif helps to bring this focused

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[119] Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), xxiv.

[120] "The twelve were questioning him about the parables" (ἠρώτων).

[121] Internal questioning on the part of the disciples, expressed by "astonishment."

[122] It will be shown in the exegesis of chapter 8 that Jesus is not only asking the blind man this question, ("Do you see anything?"), but in a sense, he is posing it to the disciples as well.

challenge to bear on the disciples and would-be disciples of Jesus as they are confronted with questions regarding his messianic identity and mission.

Chapter 3: Hearing and Seeing in Mark 4:1-34

Setting the Scene for Jesus' Parable Discourse

Καὶ πάλιν, "And again," (4:1) is most likely a marker added to draw attention to the fact that again, Jesus was by the sea - παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν (of Galilee) – just as he had been before (1:16; 2:13; 3:7) signaling that he is still in the region of Galilee.[123] "Again he began to teach beside the sea" may function as one of Mark's geographical markers,[124] but it also functions to set the scene for a significant teaching discourse, a discourse which will define much of the ensuing narrative through to 8:31.[125] It is here that the hearing and seeing motif in Mark begins to find explicit and sustained expression, and so it will be shown that this is true throughout chapters 4-8. However, it will also be shown that the motif does not arise out of nowhere, but rather it is a way of explicitly naming something that has been operative since chapter 1 – people have not properly understood that "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand" (1:15) in the person and work of Jesus, and this in-breaking of the kingdom should be properly heard and seen in order to be understood.

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[123] The reference could also be to ἤρξατο διδάσκειν and the idea that Jesus was often teaching. See further discussion on this idea.

[124] Most commentators have drawn attention to Mark's use of geographical markers, and his progression toward Jerusalem, culminating in his entry into the city in 11:15 after an initial foray in 11:11. Guelich notes that Mark's notation of geographical shifts "gives movement to the story without offering a specific travelogue." Guelich, *Mark 1-8*, xxv.

[125] Though there will be geographical and narrative shifts, the teaching presented in parables in chapter 4 dominates the message throughout 4-8.

Mann sees the beginning of a new section in 4:1 (4:1- 8:26), one which he labels "Jesus and the Community."[126] Though Mark brings the Twelve into focus beginning in 3:13, it is in 4:1 that the intensification begins regarding the disciples being confronted by Jesus.[127] This focus is maintained throughout, culminating in, or leading up to Peter's confession in 8:27-30.[128] At the same time, Jesus' conflict with his enemies ("outsiders," 4:11) is still operative and intensifying.

As for the first pericope of this section of Mark, as it is divided for our purposes, 4:1-2 sets the scene for the parable which dominates the chapter up to verse 20. More broadly, however, the meaning of the parable, as well as the idea of Jesus' intent with the use of parables, continues until verse 34. Mark's use of ἀκούω in verse 41 may suggest that 4:35-41 belongs within this pericope, but the story is not part of the parable discourse proper. Nevertheless, the connection will be explained as that passage (4:35-41) is dealt with in chapter 4.

A Parable of Hearing[129] *(4:1-9; 13-20)*

Mark tells us that Jesus began to teach (διδάσκειν) his disciples, as well as the crowd assembled on the shore of the lake, "many things in parables" (ἐν παραβολαῖς πολλὰ). It has been claimed that Mark, in his abundance of miracles and lack of teaching

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[126] See Mann's outline of Mark and comments on 4:1. C.S. Mann, *Mark: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1986), 261.

[127] Other outlines which divide this section differently certainly have merit, particularly for the purpose of a more historical study. However, for the purpose of this thesis, focusing as it does on a discourse analysis of the narrative, it is important simply to point out that 4:1-8:30 seems to focus more on the relationship between Jesus and his disciples, intensifying the focus on the disciples' comprehension/incomprehension of Jesus.

[128] On this narrative shift, see the previous discussion in chapter 2.

[129] Kittel suggests, "The parables of sowing, in which the actualization of the kingdom is described (Mt. 13:1 ff.; Mk. 4:26), are parables of hearing." Kittel rightly recognizes that the parables of this chapter are indeed about sowing the seed of the word, as well as the in-breaking of the Kingdom, but the primary idea is hearing throughout the chapter. Thus, in this case, we apply Kittel's label to the main parable of the chapter in verses 3-9. Kittel, 219.

material (Sermon on the Mount, etc.), does not have much interest in presenting Jesus' teaching or demonstrating his authority through his teaching. However, Hooker notes that Mark uses the word διδαχή "teaching" five times in his Gospel, and the verb διδάσκω seventeen times. Furthermore, Mark has already noted the authoritative nature of Jesus' teaching (cf. 1:27).[130] Mark's use of "he began to teach" (ἤρξατο διδάσκειν) in verse 1, and in verse 2 the imperfect ἐδίδασκεν, suggest that he sees this as normative for Jesus' ministry. It is Jesus' teaching, then, his word which must be heard, that dominates the chapter up to verse 35. As such, this section has often been referred to as the parable discourse.

It should come as no surprise that the teaching is in parables. It has been noted that at least 35 percent of Jesus' teaching, as recorded by the Synoptists, is in parabolic form.[131] Mark has already mentioned that Jesus was speaking to the scribes ἐν παραβολαῖς, "in parables" (3:23), but it is in chapter four that we see the idea developed, particularly as Mark includes an explanation for the use of parables. Stein notes that in the Septuagint, the Greek term παραβολή "translates the Hebrew word *mashal* in all but two instances (Eccl 1:17; Sir 47:17)."[132] The meaning of *mashal* then has been described as "an allusive narrative which is told for an ulterior purpose."[133] Parables have different functions in different contexts, but many scholars believe that

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[130] Hooker, *Gospel of Mark*, 119.

[131] Robert H. Stein, *The Method and Message of Jesus' Teachings*, Rev. ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 33.

[132] Ibid., 34.

[133] David Stern, "Jesus' Parables from the Perspective of Rabbinic Literature: The Example of the Wicked Husbandmen," in *Parable and Story in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Clemens Thomas and Michael Wyschogrod (New York, NY: Paulist, 1989), 58, as quoted in Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories With Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 8.

they are intended primarily as teaching tools which, in the case of Jesus' parables, are "handles for understanding his teaching on the kingdom."[134]

The latter two parables in chapter 4 (vv. 26-32) are more explicitly said to be about the kingdom, but the concluding statement to the discourse in verse 33 seems to encompass all the parables of this chapter. Furthermore, as Lane suggests, the commonality among the three primary parables is that of the "sowing, growth and harvest-elements which illumine the character of the Kingdom of God."[135] That is, the three parables have been introduced together in this context "to illustrate the character of the coming of the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus."[136]

James Edwards, in his well-received article on "Markan Sandwiches," suggests that 4:1-20, which encompasses the first parable in this discourse, represents one of at least nine of these sandwiches, where a pericope consists of three units of material in an A^1-B-A^2 pattern. The middle B-unit "forms an independent unit of material," while the flanking A-units complement each other, both being needed to complete the story.[137] In the case of 4:1-20, it could be debated that verses 14-20 are needed to complete the story, and perhaps those who see Jesus' explanation of the parable as a later addition by the Early Church would not have much trouble removing it from the sandwich.[138] However,

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[134] Snodgrass, *Stories*, 8. Cf. also Craig Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990). While he acknowledges that parables sometimes work to "conceal" the truth, Blomberg leans toward a positive view of their teaching role as "revealing" truth. Cf. esp. pages 53-55.

[135] Lane, 149.

[136] Ibid., 149. Hooker agrees with the view that the key parable in 3-9 is a kingdom parable, but her explanation is that "from the interpretation that the evangelist inserts between the parable and its explanation in verses 10-12 [suggests] that he understands the Parable of the Sower...as also having something to do with the kingdom." Morna Hooker, "Mark's Parables of the Kingdom (Mark 4:1-34)," in Richard N. Longenecker, *The Challenge of Jesus' Parables*, McMaster New Testament Studies (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 79.

[137] James R. Edwards, "Markan Sandwiches: The Significance of Interpolations in Markan Narratives," *Novum Testamentum* 31.3 (1989): 197.

[138] See note 146 on the issue of the authenticity of Jesus' explanation.

Edwards may be correct in presuming that Mark intends this in his structure, and if this is so, it may be further evidence of the authenticity of the explanation.

Edwards maintains that the middle unit in these sandwiches provides the "hermeneutical key for the understanding of the whole,"[139] and in this case, the middle section of 4:10-13 will be shown to do just that. As we bite into this sandwich, we will begin with both slices of bread, so to speak. That is, we will discuss first the parable as a whole, interpreting the details of the parable from the standpoint of both the presentation of the parable in verses 3-9 and its explanation in 14-20 before attending to verses 10-13. The sandwich outline, adapted from Edwards, may be pictured this way:

A^1 4:1-9 – the parable (with introduction)
B 4:10-13 – the purpose of parables
A^2 4:14-20 – the explanation of the parable

The key parable in this discourse is what has been called the parable of the soils, sower, or seeds.[140] The parable is found in all of the Synoptics, but only Mark has included Jesus' opening command in verse 3 - Ἀκούετε, "Listen!" Mark's strong emphasis on hearing comes across in this first word, an imperative directed not only to the crowd on the shore of the lake, but also to his disciples, since they are present in the inner circle inquiring about the meaning of the parable in verse 10. Structurally, we see Mark's framing of the parable with ἀκούω occurring again in 4:9, a clear indicator that fundamentally, this is "a solemn call to attentive hearing."[141] Hearing may not be the only sense called for in this verse, however. Marcus notes that the somewhat awkward pairing of Ἀκούετε with ἰδοὺ (Look!) suggests that since this parable is so important (cf. 4:13), the "audience must exert both their sense of sight and their sense of sound in order to take

[139] Edwards, "Markan Sandwiches," 200.
[140] France, 188.
[141] Lane, 153.

it in."[142] That sight is called for by the inclusion of ἰδοὺ could be debated on the grounds that it may also mean in this context, "Behold," or "Pay attention," in the sense of hearing intently.[143] Nevertheless, sight comes into play soon enough in verse 12, just before Jesus explains the importance (v.13) and the meaning of the parable (vv.14-20).

Some have heard an echo of the *Shema* (Isa 6:4) in Mark's unique employment of the verb ἀκούω to begin the parable.[144] The *Shema* is certainly not a foreign concept to Mark's Gospel (cf. 12:28-34), and the immediate context is replete with other OT language. Further, the idea that Jesus would be calling people to love him alone and obey his commands is not far off from what seems to be the end goal of the parable. However, the inclusion of Ἀκούετε at the beginning of the parable could also simply be Mark's way of tying together the entire section, where he repeatedly uses the verb ἀκούω (13 times in chapter 4).

So what exactly are they (or we) called to hear? That Jesus himself provides the interpretation for this parable is perhaps an indicator of the importance of the parable as paradigmatic for understanding all the parables. Jesus asks "those around him with the twelve" (v.10), "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all [any of] the parables?" (v.13) Thus, the importance is spelled out in the idea that this parable reveals the key to understanding all of Jesus' parables of the kingdom, and the

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[142] Marcus, 292.

[143] And so the ESV, for example, has only "Listen!" which suggests only one unified idea of a call to attentive listening.

[144] Most commonly noted is the work of Birger Gerhardsson, "The Parable of the Sower and Its Interpretation," *New Testament Studies* 14 (1968): 165-93. Gerhardsson goes beyond merely suggesting an echo of the *Shema* with the use of "Listen!/Hear!," he goes on to suggest that the soils described in the parable correspond with different portions of the *Shema*. Apparently without buying into the soil/*Shema* correlation, Hooker seems cautiously supportive of the basic idea of an echo in Ἀκούετε. Cf. Hooker, *Mark*, 122; "Mark's Parables," 89. In contrast to Hooker's support, Guelich emphatically denies the connection stating without qualification or further explanation, "The thematic use of 'hearing' in 4:1-34 make any connection of 4:3a with the Shema (Deut 6:4) highly dubious both for the pre-Markan tradition as well as for Mark." Guelich, *Mark,* 192.

complexity of the parable is such that it is doubtful that the disciples (or Mark's hearers/readers) could have understood it without the help of Jesus' allegorical interpretation.[145]

Jesus explains that, "The sower sows the word" (v.14).[146] Neither the identity of the sower or the word is explained further, but most modern scholars believe the sower to refer at least to God, if not also to Jesus and the Apostles and other preachers of the gospel in the Early Church.[147] Marcus suggests that with the use of ἐξῆλθεν, "went out," hearers/readers would make a connection between the sower and Jesus, who has already been described as going out (ἐξῆλθεν) in 1:38 and 2:13. Marcus further suggests that the use in 1:38 of ἐξῆλθεν is particularly meaningful and perhaps memorable, because in that context, Jesus is not simply exiting a house; he is "moving out into the world to accomplish his mission."[148]

As for the word (ὁ λόγος), which is the seed, most agree that the seed represents either Jesus himself or his proclamation of the kingdom in word and deed which has already been taking place in chapters 1-3. Thus, the word in view is the gospel, the good news about the kingdom.[149] It is, as Lane puts it, "Jesus' word as he proclaims the

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[145] Marcus, *Mark*, 294.

[146] That Jesus is actually the one who gave this interpretation (and not the Early Church) is highly doubted by many scholars, but what seems to be at issue is the *a priori* commitment of many scholars to an out-dated view of parables put forth by Adolf Julicher in which parables are to be understood as communicating only one main point. It is agreed that fanciful allegorical interpretations should be rejected, but as Snodgrass points out, Julicher's "rejection of allegorizing led him to the blunder of rejecting allegory and of limiting parables to one point of correspondence between story and reality, with the parables being reduced to pious religious maxims." Snodgrass, "A Hermeneutics of Hearing," 61. Ladd points to C.E.B. Cranfield, *Scottish Journal of Theology* 4 (1951): 405-12, for a thorough study supporting the authenticity of the parable. George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, Rev. ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 93.

[147] Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 227.

[148] Joel Marcus, *Mystery,* 38.

[149] That ὁ λόγος is anachronistic and could not have been employed by Mark, see Marcus (*Mark*, 308), but in response to this allegation, and in favor of its authenticity, see France (204; 217) where he

Kingdom; it is the decisive messianic word of power through which the Kingdom is disclosed and is demonstrated as having come."[150]

One of the noticeable differences between the presentation of the parable and Jesus' explanation of the parable is the use of the verb ἀκούω (three times in verses 3-9; four times in 14-20). In the presentation of the parable in verses 3-9, the seed is sown into the soil, but since soils do not "hear," the verb is reserved as a summons for people to hear the parable (cf. the summons of verses 3 and 9). In the explanation, Jesus explains that there are different kinds of people who "hear the word" (e.g. οἱ τὸν λόγον ἀκούσαντες). It seems somewhat natural, then, to understand the soils as being likened to various types of people. However, the Greek is somewhat awkward, a fact that has led some interpreters to suggest that people are likened to both soil and seed. This is perhaps the better option, as it seems the terms are used interchangeably. This should not obscure the fact that the parable describes two types of responses to the good news of the kingdom: a fruitful response and an unfruitful response (described in three ways).[151]

Some hear the word, and immediately, "Satan comes and takes the word" (v.15). This is an idea that Mark has continued throughout his Gospel, and the reader/hearer should not miss the veiled reference to those who accused Jesus of being an agent of Satan (cf. 3:22-30). Some hear the word but do not persevere, succumbing to the

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points out that even in the absolute, the term could have been included by Mark at the time of his writing. Cf. also Guelich's defense of authenticity, 221.

[150] Lane's paraphrase of Ridderbos. Lane, 161.

[151] Most commentators see soil and seed as functioning interchangeably to refer to people (e.g. Marcus). France argues that people are indeed likened to soil in the first instance (v.15), but that seeds are intended in the following instances. (France, 205) Blomberg disagrees, arguing that there is a "virtual interchangeability of seed and soil in the imagery and interpretation of the parable." Citing the work of Philip Payne, he argues that, "The presumed underlying Aramaic as well as the use of the Greek participle σπειρόμενοι ("being sown") suggest that soil "sown with seed" is in view in each case." Blomberg, *Intrepreting the Parables*, 228 n41. Cf. Philip B. Payne, "The Seeming Inconsistency of the Interpretation of the Parable of the Sower," *NTS* 26 (1980): 564-68. There are also those who perhaps wisely do not get too caught up in this argument, instead focusing upon the obvious meaning (Cf. for example, Hooker, 131; and Lane, who does not even mention the issue in his discussion of verses 14-20, pp. 161-63).

pressures of trouble or persecution (vv.16-17). This reference could be intended either for those in the crowds who succumbed to the influence of Jesus' opponents, or for those early readers/hearers of Mark's Gospel who were experiencing persecution (cf. chapt 13) in their own context. Others hear it but then become "unfruitful," because they are lured away by the "cares of the world," "riches," or "desires for other things" (vv.18-19). But those who are equated to the seed sown upon "good soil" hear the word (ἀκούουσιν τὸν λόγον) and become fruitful. This is the sort of hearing that Jesus is looking for in his followers, the kind that issues in a fruit-bearing response. A natural question arises, then: What is meant by the idea of bearing fruit and multiplying?

Much scholarly discussion has centered upon what is intended by the three-fold description of fruit-bearing (30, 60, 100-fold). Jeremias claims that the parable points to a remarkable harvest, and that the "one hundred-fold" harvest "symbolizes the eschatological overflowing of the divine goodness, surpassing all human measure."[152] Though the answer to this question seems elusive, perhaps France's suggestion that, "The three levels of fruitfulness are merely a narrative device to balance the three types of failure" is worth considering.[153]

Marcus suggests a Jewish background to the idea of fruit-bearing. Fruitfulness is a common theme in Scripture, "a standard image for the blessings of the 'good time coming,' the hoped-for new age (see e.g. Jer 31:12; Hos 2:21-22; Joel 2:22; Amos 9:13; Zech 8:12)."[154] Furthermore, the blessing in the eschaton is often described in the apocalyptic traditions as including "enormous agricultural yields (e.g. *1 Enoch* 10:19; *2*

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[152] Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, trans. S.H. Hooke (London: SCM, 1963), 150, as quoted in France, 192.

[153] France, 207.

[154] Marcus, *Mark*, 295.

Apoc. Bar. 29:5; Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 5.33.3)."[155] Unfruitfulness, on the other hand, is a sign of the present evil age, during which "the earth languishes under God's judgment (see e.g. Gen 3:17-18; Jer 8:13; Joel 1:12)."[156] Marcus concludes that the message of the parable seems to be that "the hoped-for new age of the dominion of God is, in Jesus' ministry, arriving, despite all the evidence to the contrary."[157] This, he explains, is the "mystery" which has been given to the disciples (v.11). On this reading, we learn that, "For Mark the Parable of the Sower imparts 'the mystery of the kingdom of God."[158]

While Marcus does not deny the individual call to fruitful response on the part of individuals, he seems to downplay this aspect. He is right to emphasize the idea that the parable teaches that the kingdom is surely coming (and in some ways is already present) and will bring a time of fruitfulness (particularly in the eschaton upon the consummation of the kingdom). He also seems justified in stating that this circumstance-defying truth is the mystery of the kingdom. However, the parable also emphasizes the distinction between two types of people and their responses to the proclamation of the word. The distinction "is between those who are responsive to God's commands, and so true members of his people, and those who had failed to obey his will."[159] Thus, there is an individual aspect to the idea of fruit-bearing; it is expected that true followers of Jesus, those who hear and respond appropriately, bear fruit in keeping with repentance. This individual fruit-bearing is an embodying of the kingdom. This embodiment consists in those who respond appropriately, being a foretaste of the eschatological outpouring of

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[155] Ibid., 295.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Hooker, *Mark*, 125.

blessing that Marcus described as they allow the kingdom to take root in their lives and to grow.

The Purpose of the Parable(s) (4:10-13)

Marcus is right to recognize that verses 10-13 provide a crucial key to understanding the parable of the sower, the explanation of Jesus notwithstanding.[160] For it is the purpose of the parable, and by extension, all parables, expressed as it is in verses 10-13, which reveals to us the reason why there are different responses to Jesus and his gospel of the kingdom. Jesus poses his first direct question to his disciples in verse 13 – "Do you not understand this parable?" He continues, "How then will you understand all the [other] parables?" Together with verses 11 and 12, this small unit, the middle of the sandwich, to use Edwards's terminology, represents the key to understanding what Jesus means by hearing and seeing. His concern for his disciples' understanding, as expressed in verse 13, is a concern for their proper hearing and perception of him and his mission. As important as these verses are for understanding Jesus' message, however, it is not an easy task to understand their meaning.[161]

Verse 10 sets the scene: "And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve were asking him about the parables." It seems clear from this statement that Jesus is no longer in his make-shift pulpit, the boat on the sea from which he gave the parable of the sower. He is presumably away from the crowds, alone with the twelve and a

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[160] Marcus, *Mark*, 295.

[161] Even an accomplished Markan scholar such as Morna Hooker can say of Mark 4:10-13: "These are perhaps the most difficult and the most discussed verses in the whole of Mark's gospel." Hooker, *Mark*, 125. Similarly, Telford notes that in his preparation for the first volume of *The Interpretation of Mark*, he learned that Lambrecht, in his study on the parables in Mark, had found over 44 books and articles written on Mark chapter 4 in only a seven year period between 1967 and 1974. Cf. William R. Telford, *The Interpretation of Mark*. 2nd ed., (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 1.

smaller group of so-called disciples. Bowker has noted that Jesus' practice of teaching the crowds publically while instructing disciples privately was a common practice among rabbis at that time.[162] This inner circle of followers are said to be "asking him about the parables," the imperfect verb (ἠρώτων) perhaps suggesting that either the questions were numerous or the discussion lengthy. They also apparently asked him about more than this single parable (note the plural, παραβολάς), though since this parable is paradigmatic for others (v.13), his answer would seem to apply for all of his kingdom parables.

To the insider disciples, Jesus explains: "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables" (v.11). Hooker rightly notes that δέδοται, "has been given," should be taken as a divine passive,[163] indicating God's sovereign choice to reveal this secret to certain followers of Jesus. The "secret" (μυστήριον) which has been given to them, is not something that they have deciphered, but it has been revealed to them, "with a view to that revelation being shared with others."[164] It is helpful to note that "secret" is a better English word (as in ESV) to capture the idea of μυστήριον in this context, since "mystery," as some translations have it (cf. NASB, KJV), may connote something of a puzzle to be figured out, whereas what is in view here is the idea of "hiddenness," not "incomprehensibility." It is "privileged information" which is revealed, not something to be figured out.[165]

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[162] J.W. Bowker, "Mystery and Parable: Mark iv. 1-20," *Journal of Theological Studies* 25 (1974): 111-13, quoted in Craig A. Evans, *To See and Not Perceive: Isaiah 6:9-10 in Early Jewish and Christian Interpretation,* Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 64, ed. David J.A. Clines and Philip R. Davies (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1989), 105.

[163] Ibid., 128.

[164] France, 196. France locates this meaning most immediately in the use of the Aramaic *raz* used in Dan 2:18-19, 27-30, 47, which is "consistently translated in both the LXX and Thdt by μυστήριον." Moreover, France rightly notes the connection to Qumran, where divine secrets are revealed in apocalyptic literature. France, 196, and 196n38.

[165] Ibid., 196.

This secret is that of the mysterious in-breaking of the kingdom of God into the world. In the Gospels, the term is used only in this context and similarly in its parallels in Matthew and Luke. Outside of the NT, but from a Jewish standpoint, the term is found in Wisdom of Solomon 2:22, denoting "the secret purposes of God."[166] In the context of Wisdom of Solomon (see footnote below), the idea is that those who belong to the devil are those who are blinded to the secret purposes of God. If this were a popular notion in Mark's day, it could be linked to Jesus' explanation of one of the groups representing a failed response to hearing the word, which is that of the seed taken away by Satan (4:15).[167]

As mentioned above in the discussion of Jesus' explanation, those who become fruitless on account of Satan's snatching the word away most likely is a reference to those who ascribed Jesus' power to Satan (cf. 3:22-27). However, the reference is broader in the context of the entire Gospel, as we see Mark's broader concerns regarding the kingdom of Satan being opposed to the in-breaking of God's kingdom and his purposes (cf. 8:33; also the numerous exorcisms). Marcus demonstrates that the chiastic structure of 3:21-35, where the kingdom of Satan is discussed, reveals that the parable of the strong man is in the center of the structure, strategically placed in the narrative to explain the opposition that Jesus is experiencing from the scribes and even from his own family,

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[166] Lane, 156 n24. One might include the whole set of verses (2:21-25) to complete the idea which is: "Thus they reasoned, but they were led astray, for their wickedness blinded them, and *they did not know the secret purposes of God*, nor hope for the wages of holiness, nor discern the prize for blameless souls; for God created man for incorruption, and made him in the image of his own eternity, but through the devil's envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his party experience it."

[167] The reference to Wisdom of Solomon is far from definitive as an explanation of the term's meaning. However, the point is to illustrate what possible common religious ideas regarding the term *may have* been circulating at the time. From a similar era as Wisdom, however, we also see a slightly different use of the term within apocalyptic, that of "heavenly secrets" revealed to seers (see discussion in chapter 2 of this thesis). This apocalyptic meaning has in part led N.T. Wright (cf. *New Testament and the People of God*) to his apocalyptic reading of Mark, something of which this author is not entirely convinced. Of note is the conclusion of BAGD: "Our lit. uses μ. in ref. to the transcendent activity of God and its impact on God's people."

who are described as "outsiders" in 3:31-32, as opposed to those (inside) sitting around him[168] – these are his mother and brothers (insiders), those who do "the will of God" (vv. 34-35). In the broader context of the passage, then, the outsiders are not just his family, but those whose response to him is one of denying his identity and his mission as the Son of God. They are those who actively oppose and are therefore under the influence of another kingdom. As Marcus concludes, the division between insiders and outsiders is, in part, attributable to "the ineradicable division (at least at this point) and fierce enmity between him and the demonic forces that hold the human race in thrall and blind it to its true good."[169]

Thus, as for the identity of "those outside" (τοῖς ἔξω) it seems that the group consists, in part, of those whose heart disposition is such that they refuse to hear and see what God is doing in the person and mission of Jesus. That people refuse or resist God is not solely attributed to the work of Satan, as the parable explains, and thus culpability still lies with individuals. Perhaps this is one of the primary messages to grasp regarding the various failed soils – that there are all kinds of reasons why sinful people resist the word of God. The division is between "those who are open to new insight and those who are resistant to change,"[170] but at the same time, the division is between those who have been given the secret and those who have not been given the secret of the kingdom of God. This sort of tension between divine agency and human responsibility, and thus, divine judgment and human culpability, is operative throughout Mark's Gospel, but it is especially present in verses 11-12, as we shall see.

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[168] Mark (or Jesus) seems to use the physical situation of Jesus' mother and brothers being outside the house and others listening to Jesus inside the house to illustrate the idea of outsiders and insiders.

[169] Marcus, *Mark,* 278-79. Parenthesis denotes my clarification.

[170] France, 199.

As noted above, the secret of the kingdom which has been revealed to these more-or-less responsive disciples, is that God's kingdom rule has come near in the person and mission of Jesus, and that his kingdom is growing, despite any evidence to the contrary. This is the basic message of the two parables which speak of the kingdom explicitly in 4:26-29 and 4:30-32. Together, the two short parables provide clarification on this matter regarding what is being said in the overall context of chapter 4 regarding the nature of the kingdom and what Jesus means by the "secret of the kingdom." By the first parable (again with a seed theme), we learn that God is causing his kingdom to grow, causing it to break into history, regardless of whether those in the world understand (vv. 26-29). In the second parable (vv. 30-32), we learn that the kingdom of God may, so far, have gone unnoticed, like a tiny mustard seed, but it will eventually blossom and become something far greater than one might have expected. Hooker succinctly explains the meaning of these parables in their relation to Jesus' purposes in his teaching on the kingdom through his parable discourse, saying:

> For Mark, the Kingdom of God is displayed in the life of Jesus, but it is displayed like seed thrown on to the earth: you do not know that it is there unless you are let into the secret. But what the Kingdom will finally be is a very different matter: its greatness comes by the power of God, as silent and mysterious and inevitable as the power of growth.[171]

In contrast to those who have been given this revelation of the secret that the kingdom of God is here (and also not yet) in Jesus, for those on the outside, "everything is in parables." That parables are commonly used by Jesus as a teaching tool to convey truth is widely recognized, but equally apparent is the fact that they are also used to confound. That is, they are used both to reveal and conceal truth. Blomberg notes that the purpose of parables, as it is explained in 4:11-12, closely fits the purposes of allegory as a

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[171] Hooker, *Mark*, 148.

literary genre. Those common purposes are - A) to illustrate a viewpoint in an artistic and educational way; B) to keep its message from being immediately clear to all its readers without further reflection; C) to win over its audience to accept a particular set of beliefs or to act in a certain way. Blomberg recognizes that A and B seem contradictory, but they actually complement one another in order to accomplish C.[172] In this way, "Jesus' preaching deliberately led people, at first gently, but then inexorably, to a point of decision – either to follow or to reject him, and from his perspective those who rejected him did not really understand either who he was or what were the consequences of their actions."[173]

With that preface on the nature of parables, we may proceed with the famous *hina* clause that leads into verse 12. Together with the *hina*, verse 12 reads:

> so that, they may indeed see but not perceive,
> and may indeed hear but not understand,
> lest they should turn (repent) and be forgiven.
>
> ἵνα **βλέποντες βλέπωσιν** καὶ μὴ **ἴδωσιν**,
> καὶ **ἀκούοντες ἀκούωσιν** καὶ μὴ συνιῶσιν,
> μήποτε ἐπιστρέψωσιν καὶ ἀφεθῇ αὐτοῖς.

If the *hina* (ἵνα) of Mark 4:12 is taken to denote at least the notion of purpose, as it clearly seems (see further discussion for this conclusion), then what Jesus seems to be suggesting is that he speaks to outsiders in parables for the express purpose of concealing the truth from them. What is more, the *mepote* (μήποτε) beginning the last clause suggests that the further purpose of concealment is so that these outsiders may not experience repentance and forgiveness. In order to discern what is being communicated here, it is helpful to consider the quote's origin and meaning in its original context.

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[172] Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 54.
[173] Ibid., 55.

Most scholars naturally recognize Mark 4:12 as an abbreviated quote of Isaiah 6:9-10. Matthew makes this connection explicit in his version (Matt 13:14), and the wording is similar to the LXX:

> (6:9) **ἀκοῇ ἀκούσετε** καὶ οὐ μὴ συνῆτε καὶ **βλέποντες βλέψετε** καὶ **οὐ μὴ ἴδητε**,
> (10) ἐπαχύνθη γὰρ ἡ καρδία τοῦ λαοῦ τούτου καὶ τοῖς ὠσὶν αὐτῶν βαρέως ἤκουσαν καὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν ἐκάμμυσαν **μήποτε** ἴδωσιν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς καὶ τοῖς ὠσὶν ἀκούσωσιν καὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ συνῶσιν καὶ ἐπιστρέψωσιν καὶ ἰάσομαι αὐτούς

The MT reads in English (ESV):

> Keep on hearing, but do not understand;
> Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.
> Make the heart of this people dull,
> And their ears heavy,
> And blind their eyes,
> Lest they see with their eyes,
> And hear with their ears,
> And understand with their hearts,
> And turn and be healed.

As one can see, Mark has abbreviated the quote and made a few minor changes. For example, he begins with seeing, and then hearing. He also has the hearing and seeing in third person rather than second person. Additionally, he leaves out the blindness of eyes, deafness of ears, and the heart, which does not understand. These elements of eyes, ears, and hearts will find expression in later passages in Mark, and will be found to continue the same hearing and seeing motif, as we shall see in subsequent exegesis.

In the LXX version of Isaiah, the ideas of seeing and hearing are complementary to repentance and healing, which could have led to the abbreviation in Mark, though Mark's version has forgiveness in place of healing. Interestingly, the Targum version also has forgiveness in place of healing. Additional similarities between Mark's version and that of the text of the Targum are that verse 9 of Isaiah's version has shifted to 3rd person

in the Targum in order to set up the relative clause which follows (ἵνα), and the Targum version's verbs, like Mark's, are indicative, rather than imperative (MT). In light of the changes which Mark has made, most scholars agree that he follows the Targum version of these verses rather than the LXX.[174]

By appealing to the Targum as the origin of Mark's quotation, some scholars have sought to downplay the severity of Jesus' words, since both the Targum and the LXX make minor changes in order to shift from the severity of the OT (MT) version. This softening shift consists in placing the responsibility for hardened hearts on the part of people rather than the LORD.[175] In his thorough study of Isaiah 6:9-10, Evans concludes the following in regard to the MT version of the text:

> Isaiah's vision was not a vision for the purpose of his call into the prophetic vocation, but was a vision and commission of judgment. Isaiah has witnessed the heavenly council convened for purposes of decreeing a final judgment upon Jerusalem. It is [in] this sense, then, that Isaiah's 'call' in ch. 6 should be understood. His call was a commission to deliver the message of impending judgment. This judgment began with the very message itself, for *the message was to act as a catalyst in promoting obduracy, and so guarantee the certainty of judgment.*[176]

Thus, Evans's conclusion on the Hebrew version is that the message is one that is given to God's people for the purpose of hardening their hearts. However, other scholars have also rightly recognized that the rebellious condition of the people which is implied in the text must play some role in provoking God to make this pronouncement. Again, the interplay between divine action and human responsibility is delicate in this passage. D.W. Watts, recognizing this tension, says, "This is not a one-sided action. That Israel's

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[174] Evans, 92.
[175] Ibid., 80.
[176] Ibid., 24. Emphasis mine.

heart is 'hard' and that YHWH has made it so must be spoken in dialectical balance."[177] Thus, in some sense, there is a notion of "result" in the MT context.[178] This view is strengthened by the fact that the scene in Isaiah 6:1-7, as recognized by the majority of OT interpreters (including Evans), is that of a heavenly courtroom, with the Great Judge, Yahweh, holding court and then pronouncing his sentence (6:9-10). The idea, then, is that "Yahweh as judge ratifies their choice, sentencing them to a hardening of heart (not unlike Pharoah) and confirming them through the prophet's word in the blind and deaf image of the gods they have chosen (Pss 115:4-8; 135:15-18)."[179]

Having surveyed the MT, LXX, Targum, Qumran texts, as well as that of the NT, Evans concludes that the original idea of purposeful hardening in the Hebrew version is altered along the way in the Greek versions, but the basic thrust of the Hebrew is maintained in Mark 4:12. That is, many scholars will agree that the Markan version is closer to the wording of the Targum, but the meaning in context is closer to that of the MT.[180] This means that there is both purpose and result intended in the Markan context, as denoted in part by the *hina*.[181]

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[177] D.W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, WBC Vol. 24, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985), 75.

[178] Several OT scholars recognize this tension: Cf. Watts (mentioned above); Brevard Childs, *Isaiah*, The Old Testament Library, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 56. Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes: vol. 7, Isaiah*, trans. James Martin (1884; Reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 199-201; J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC, vol. 20 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 83-84 (though Motyer seems to lean too strongly away from purpose).

[179] Rick E. Watts, "Mark," In *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G.K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 152.

[180] Evans rightly concludes this, but he makes little room, if any at all, for the idea of result, preferring to speak almost exclusively of purpose. So, as it is further explained here, the meaning expressed in the MT, over against the Greek versions of the MT, is assumed by the present author with the qualification that the MT version expresses purpose-result, just as the Markan version. See note below for clarification on the label "purpose-result."

[181] Most scholars see purpose in this use of ἵνα, but some allow for a purpose-result sense, which becomes highly theological. Wallace does not come down on one side, but seems to favor result only, though he offers "purpose" and "purpose-result" as legitimate options. "Purpose-result," Wallace says, "indicates *both the intention and its sure accomplishment*." It is this "purpose-result" sense which is favored by the present author. For clarification of Wallace's categories, see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek*

The force of purpose causes a bit of theological discomfort, especially when it seems that Jesus uses parables to teach and reveal truth. However, just when one tries to wiggle out from under the purpose notion inherent in the *hina*, the *mepote* comes along at the beginning of the last clause to reinforce a similar idea of purpose. Though *mepote* may be considered to function as a "marker of inquiry" in some contexts, the use in Mark 4:12, following such a clear purpose statement, carries on the idea of purpose, which is its usual sense.[182] The idea in the last clause, then, is clearly a part of the purpose of hardening: that they will not repent and be forgiven.

Theologically, result seems preferable, since this would convey the idea that obduracy is solely the result of God's judgment, rather than the conclusion that obduracy is intentionally caused by God. The text, however, clearly denotes purpose as well. France, who also sees the idea of result under the surface, is clear on this predominance of the notion of purpose when he says, "The quotation is introduced by ἵνα, and it is this conjunction which more than anything else suggests a *purpose* of concealment in Jesus' pronouncement."[183] We must not assume, however, that we know the full meaning of that purpose in God's inscrutable wisdom. Calvin comments on the Isaiah passage, saying:

> The Jews were deprived of reason and understanding, because they were rebels against God. Yet if you inquire into the first cause, we must come to the predestination of God. But as that purpose is hidden from us, we must not too eagerly search into it; for the everlasting scheme of the divine purpose is beyond our reach, but we ought to consider the cause which lies plainly before our eyes, namely, the rebellion by which they rendered themselves unworthy of the blessings so numerous and so great.[184]

Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament, With Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), pp. 471-74.

[182] BAGD, 648. Here BAGD suggest that the use in Mark 4:12 falls under "marker of negated purpose," and denotes purpose: "in order that...not, oft. Expressing apprehension," particularly with an aorist subjunctive verb following, as in this case.

[183] France, 199.

[184] John Calvin, *Commentary on the Prophet of Isaiah*, vol. 1, trans. William Pringle, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1958). Similarly, on the Isaiah passage, Brevard Childs states: "It is constitutive of

Further Explanation and Exhortation for Right Hearing (4:21-25; 33-34)[185]

In a limited way, Jesus offers some explanation of his aims in deliberately concealing the truth from outsiders. In 4:21-25, he offers a short parable about a lamp under a basket. Here, in one sense, the light most likely represents what has been alluded to in the parable and explanation so far – fundamentally, that the kingdom of God has come in Jesus. With this parabolic saying, Jesus explains that what is being concealed will be revealed. That is, the light will not be hidden, but it will come into open view.

There is more to these parabolic sayings, however. Marcus notes that this saying "goes beyond the notion that hiddenness will yield to openness; it implies that hiddenness serves the purpose of openness." Verse 22 is key to this interpretation: "For nothing is hidden except (ἵνα φανερωθῇ) to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light (ἵνα ἔλθῃ εἰς φανερόν)." Here we have come back to Blomberg's three points about the purpose of parables. In the economy of God, both revealing and concealing may be accomplished with the parables concerning the kingdom. If we may offer some conjecture as to what God's purpose was in Jesus' concealing the truth from outsiders, it may be wise to follow Marcus in his suggestion that Jesus' hardening of his hearers through his parables in part led to his own death at the hands of these so-called outsiders who are blind and deaf to the identity, mission and message of Jesus. Jesus'

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biblical hardening that the initiative is placed securely with God in the mystery of his inscrutable will. Of course, it is equally clear that Israel's sinfulness formed the grounds for the judgment. The philosophical objection to a logical inconsistence that has continually been raised since the Enlightenment plays no role whatever in the Old Testament. The hard juxtaposition of divine initiative and Israel's guilt remains unmoved." Childs, *Isaiah*, 56.

[185] What follows is not a systematic exposition of this section, but a discussion which will address what in this section clarifies the overall teaching of the purpose of parables, and specifically, the meaning of hearing and seeing and the parable of the sower/soils. The two explicit kingdom parables in 4:26-32 are mentioned above in the context of the discussion of the kingdom, or the meaning of the secret of the kingdom.

death, as it is clearly represented in Mark, was necessary for the redemption of mankind (Mark 10:45). Marcus, in a well-known and well-worded quote, says it this way:

> God intends the outsiders to be blinded by Jesus' parables and his parabolic actions (4:11-12), so that they oppose him and eventually bring about his death; in his death, however, the new age of revelation will dawn. Thus the hiddenness of Jesus' identity (cf. the *hina* clause in 4:12) leads to his death, which in turn results in the open manifestation of his identity (cf. the *hina* clause in 4:22). The *hina* clauses in vv 21-22, like the one in 4:12, refer to God's intention, and all of these *hina* clauses intersect at the cross.[186]

Thus, the blinding, deafening, or hardening of the outsiders is not necessarily to be permanent (though it will be for some). Jesus' call for right hearing in chapter 4 is not a one-time opportunity. The Gospel of Mark continues this call, as we shall see, throughout the remaining chapters, even for those in the crowds or the so-called outsiders. In Mark's retelling of these accounts, his implicit intention is also that the message and mission of Jesus should be retold and heard again and again[187] for others to be confronted with the truth about the kingdom of God. The underlying purpose of revelation in Mark is not to be lost in the restrictions of the purpose clause in 4:12. Furthermore, Jesus goes on to speak more parables throughout his ministry (4:34), and we should only presume that he did so in order both to reveal and to conceal. In doing so, he is simply continuing his ministry as promised even in the OT. Around the turn of the 3rd century AD, Clement of Alexandria recognized this continuity when he summarized Jesus' practice of speaking in parables:

> At times our Savior spoke the Word to the apostles by means of mysterious sayings. Prophecy says of him: "He will open his mouth in parables, and will declare things kept secret from the foundation of the world." (Ps 78:2)...The efficacy of the Word itself, being strong and

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[186] Marcus, *Mystery*, 147.
[187] Cf. Malbon, "Echoes and Foreshadowings."

> powerful, gradually draws into itself secretly and invisibly everyone who receives it.[188]

Mark's Gospel, as well as the history of redemption (and revelation), has not ended at chapter four.[189] Similarly, those who would stop at a staunch telic reading of Isaiah 6:9-10 in the context of Mark 4:12 should also remember that Isaiah's ministry did not end with the stark pronouncement given in chapter 6. In fact, even the motif of hearing and seeing in Isaiah does not stop at chapter 6;[190] neither does the hearing and seeing motif stop at chapter 4 in Mark's narrative. For Isaiah's audience, the message continued on, as Aitken explains:

> Israel's inability to attain knowledge and understanding through hearing and seeing is...transformed by means of a corresponding theological form...whereby, in accordance now with the divine purpose for Israel's salvation, the disabilities which had prevented knowledge and sealed Israel's judgment are removed, and the sinful condition of Israel and its political and religious leadership upon which these disabilities were predicated is reversed (29.17-21; 32.1-8; 33.17-24; 35.5-6).[191]

As we shall see in the ensuing exegesis of chapters 5-8 of Mark's Gospel, there will be a similar transformation for the disciples in Mark, as Jesus rebukes them for their lack of understanding (hearing and seeing). Mark gives us a hint of this transformation

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[188] Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata 5.12*, in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, New Testament, vol. 2, *Mark*, ed. Thomas C. Oden and Christopher A. Hall (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 55. By this, Clement is also recognizing the biblical continuity inherent in Jesus' ministry as a continuation of God's prophetic ministry to draw his elect to himself.

[189] Douglas McComiskey argues that Jesus' place in salvation history at this point is not radically different in relation to Isaiah's context. They both are dealing with unbelieving Jews. In regards to the Isaiah 6 passage, he suggests that, "the disjunction is insignificant, even non-existent, because God's word in the passage would be intended for rebellious Jews from Isaiah's day through to Jesus' day and probably beyond. Accordingly, Jesus' preaching had essentially the identical function and audience as Isaiah's, but at a later time." Douglas S. McComiskey, "Exile and the Purpose of Jesus' Parables (Mark 4:10-12; Matt 13:10-17; Luke 8:9-10)," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 51.1 (March 2008): 60.

[190] Indeed, it continues through 42:16-20, as Watts notes. Watts, *Isaiah*, 75.

[191] K.T. Aitken, "Hearing and Seeing: Metamorphoses of a Motif in Isaiah 1-39," in *Among the Prophets: Language, Image and Structure in the Prophetic Writings*, ed. Philip R. Davies and David J.A. Clines (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 41.

that lay ahead for the disciples when he says in 4:33, "With many such parables he spoke the word to them,[192] *as they were able to hear it.*" Despite perhaps giving the impression that the disciples, as insiders who were given the secret of the kingdom, were without any blindness or deafness, the rest of Mark's narrative makes clear that the disciples were still in need of revelation and healing of their blindness. Jesus exhorts them again in 4:24 to "pay attention to what you hear!" The present imperative with the indicative (βλέπετε τί ἀκούετε; note the use again of βλέπω and ἀκούω) suggests the idea: "Pay attention to what you *are hearing.*" This will be an ongoing concern for Jesus regarding his disciples' growing understanding of him and his mission.

What we have come to understand in this chapter is that proper hearing and seeing issues in a response of obedience, not simply an assent to truth. Thus, one may hear, but not truly listen. True disciples are called to embody the message of the kingdom and to bear fruit in their actions as they carry the mission of the kingdom forward. The actions of the disciples in the ensuing narrative will show that they still are in need of understanding in order to properly embody and enact those truths. Mark's concerns are still somewhat broad in terms of the identity of the "insiders." The text does not restrict us only to the twelve when we think of Mark's insiders; they are all those who respond to Jesus' teaching with true hearing and thus obedience – "*Whoever* has ears to hear, let him hear!" (4:9; 23)[193]

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[192] "to them" (αὐτοῖς) could very well be referring to Jesus' broad audience of both insiders and outsiders. If also to outsiders, it functions to call them back from their unbelief and hardness of heart. Jesus issues a call to hear to everyone present in 7:14, a sign that he has not given up completely on reaching even those who were hostile toward him and his message.

[193] Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "Narrative Criticism: How Does the Story Mean?," in *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, ed. Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore, 2nd ed., (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 43.

Understandably, much of the exegesis of Mark 4:11-12, both in this thesis and in Markan scholarship, has centered upon the meaning of these verses in regard to outsiders without speaking of what is implicitly true for insiders. According to verse 12, if insiders (or, "whoever has ears to hear") are able to hear God's word and see Jesus as the Messiah who has come to inaugurate God's kingdom, the expected result is that they would respond in repentance. In other words, true hearing and seeing issues in repentance. From the perspective of the Isaiah passage, Watts says it this way: "Seeing and hearing (the vision and word of God) should lead to understanding (of their perverted and evil ways), which should cause rational beings to change and be healed."[194] As the motif of hearing and seeing continues in Mark's Gospel, it becomes evident that we as humans are not as rational as Watts's quote may imply, and this is precisely the problem.

In the remainder of the Gospel, Jesus will go about attacking "irrational" human heart-resistance to the kingdom, especially in the hearts of his own disciples, but also in those of the outsiders. What becomes apparent is that true disciples are called to follow Jesus and to die to themselves, to take up their cross and to give up their autonomy in exchange for allegiance to God and his kingdom (8:33-38). Such an irrational bent toward autonomy and the maintenance of self-kingdoms requires a radical rooting out of its causes.[195]

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[194] Watts, *Isaiah*, 75.

[195] I owe these thoughts on the issue of autonomy as a barrier to true discipleship, and the radical measures needed for rectifying this problem, to Dr. Hans Bayer. For Bayer's own thorough exegetical foundation supporting this reading, see his forthcoming book on discipleship in Mark, and his commentary: Hans F. Bayer, *Das Evangelium des Markus*.

Chapter 4: Hearing and Seeing in Mark 4:35-8:10

Preliminary Issues

As was mentioned in chapter two, studying the motif of hearing and seeing in Mark's Gospel entails examining more than simply the explicit terms for hearing and seeing (ἀκούω, ὁράω, βλέπω), or verses such as 4:12, where the motif is most clearly expressed. It also involves recognizing how the motif is expressed in other language and other contexts, tracing how Mark develops the motif. Chapter 4, with its explicit hearing and seeing language (especially hearing) brings the hearing and seeing motif to the surface, and the motif finds explicit expression again in chapter 8, but in between are several episodes where the idea is expanded and explained by various details in the way that Mark tells the story. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the ideas in the Isaiah 6:9-10 passage, which formed the backdrop for the meaning and the use of parables in Mark 4 will find further expression in these ensuing chapters of Mark through the terminology of heart, blindness, and deafness.

The following discussion will ensue with a short analysis of Mark 4:35-41, a pericope which seems to form a bridge between the parable discourse of chapter 4 where Jesus is instructing his disciples in close quarters, and his ministry in other regions, beginning in 5:1. The pericope seems well-placed in this discussion of the entirety of chapter five, for the reason that beginning with this story, Mark includes several stories which demonstrate Jesus' power over various powers which are "hostile to God," to use

Lane's expression.[196] In outlining the significance of chapters 4-8, Malbon recognizes the emphasis on displays of Jesus' power, but she also focuses on the references to the sea. Thus, she labels this section "Mighty Deeds on and by the Sea."[197]

Malbon's attention to the flow of the narrative of chapters 4-8 is astute, and her subdivisions will work well for the purposes of highlighting a few pericopes in these chapters which function to describe in more detail the motif of hearing and seeing. Thus, following Malbon, the subdivisions used for the following discussion are as follows: 4:35-5:43; 6:1-30; 6:31-56; 7:1-23; 7:24-8:10.[198] Not every passage within these subsections will receive attention, but only those deemed pertinent to the motif of hearing and seeing.

Mark 4:35-5:43

In the first pericope (4:35-41), Mark relates a vivid story regarding the day that Jesus had completed his parable discourse. "When evening had come, he said to them, 'Let us go across to the other side [of the lake].'" A "great windstorm arose," which in turn brought water, such that the boat seemed to be on the verge of sinking (v. 37). Afraid, the disciples awaken Jesus, crying out and directly addressing him for the first time in Mark's Gospel: "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" It is unclear whether the disciples' use of the word "teacher" to address Jesus means that they saw him only as a teacher, but their complaint seems to reveal that they thought of him as being more than a teacher or Rabbi. Their words have been noted as somewhat "rude,"

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[196] Lane also has this section as 4:35-5:43. (cf. Lane, 173-74) Despite the fact that many have noticed what seems like a summary statement in 6:6, which could be a good place to divide the narrative,

[197] Cf. Malbon, "How Does the Story Mean?," 44-46.

[198] The reader is reminded of the earlier discussion regarding the inherent ambiguity in outlining the second Gospel. The sub-divisions used here are offered as an attempt to see some of the narrative plot flow, but also simply to function somewhat in a utilitarian way to break up the discussion into digestible pieces.

something along the lines of "Teacher, are we to drown for all you care?"[199] Nevertheless, even in their impertinence and their seeming devaluation of Jesus, they have already witnessed his power in other situations, and presumably they think he may be able to help. In this slight nuance, we see the disciples' understanding and misunderstanding of Jesus' identity at the same time. They understand something about his power and who he is, but if they truly knew, they probably would not have addressed him in such a "banal"[200] way. Lane notes that this is the first comment by the disciples in Mark that reveals their impertinence; the other instances occur in 6:37 and 8:4. Each instance provides an indicator of the disciples' lack of understanding of who Jesus is.[201]

In spite of the rude awakening, Jesus responds by immediately calming the sea with stern commands reminiscent of his language in 1:25, where he silenced a demon and cast him out of a man in the synagogue. The use of verbs such as ἐπετίμησεν and εἶπεν are in the same pattern as 1:25, and his strong commands to "be silent" and "shut up!" suggest an anthropomorphism, treating the sea like an animate being, or an "unruly heckler," as France says.[202] In the least, the connection shows Jesus' power extending not only over the spiritual world, but over nature as well.[203]

After rebuking the wind and waves, Jesus rebukes his disciples for their lack of faith – "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" Coming on the heels of the parable discourse, where it is said that Jesus' disciples have been granted the secret of the

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[199] Lane, 176. Quoting Moffatt.
[200] France's term for their address. France, 224.
[201] Lane, 176.
[202] France, 224.
[203] Of course my statement here is based upon my Western worldview, which draws a clear distinction, rightly or wrongly, between the spiritual and material or physical world. France notes that the OT speaks frequently of the power of God over nature, and this could have been part of Mark's concern, especially for a Jewish audience. As for the suggestion that the connection to 1:25 goes to the extent that the lake is seen as being in need of exorcism, see France's discussion, page 224.

kingdom of God, and so they in some way "see" and "hear," Jesus' rebuke serves to alert readers (and the disciples) to the fact that the disciples' understanding is not where it needs to be. Moreover, if Jesus' rebuke is not enough to alert us to this fact, the disciples' fear (after the storm has past) and question to each other – "Who then is this? – clearly points to their lack of understanding.

Though Mark has been recognized as being hard on the disciples in his Gospel, this should not necessarily lead us to believe that Jesus is exasperated with them, or that they are presented as a lost cause. The idea expressed in these moments is that they indeed do not have all the answers, but they are at least asking the right questions, and are continuing in this journey of understanding.[204] "Who then is this?" as a question, then, not only points to the disciples' obduracy, but it also points to their search for answers. They have recognized one more thing about Jesus, as it has been revealed to them by Jesus' powerful deeds: "even wind and sea obey him." In this, they are listening and looking, paying attention to what they hear and see (4:24). The reader of Mark's Gospel has already been furnished with the answer to the question in 4:41 with Mark's opening declaration, "the Son of God" (1:1). Nevertheless, he/she is further drawn into the depth of this search for understanding, for though the answer is there in the very first verse of the Gospel, there would be no need for such vivid accounts of Jesus if hearing and seeing him for who he really is were a simple concept.

The use of anthropomorphic language in addressing the wind and waves seems to extend to the use of ὑπακούω in verse 41. The wind and waves are said to ὑπακούει (from ἀκούω) "obey" him, that is, recognize his power and respond appropriately. This

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[204] Malbon, "How Does the Story Mean?," 53. Malbon says this over and against those who view the disciples' incomprehension as the primary thrust of chapters 4-8.

figurative sense should not take away from the historical reality of the story – that Jesus really did exhibit power over the sea, and thus he showed who he is as the incarnate God (cf. Job 38:8-11; Pss 65:5-8; 89:8-9; 107:23-32, etc.).[205] However, it is suggested that nature's obedience, as a fellow part of the created order, demonstrates the proper response to Jesus as king and creator. In connection with the disciples' search for understanding and the use of anthropomorphic language (as in 1:25), it seems that the presence of the verb in verse 41 could also add to the hearing and seeing motif.[206]

The obedient response of the wind and waves in some way mirrors that of the demons in 1:26 (also ὑπακούω in 1:27),[207] which is also like the present text, accompanied by a question from onlookers: "What is this?" (1:27) In this text, the question is one which many commentators think is the central question of the Gospel of Mark: "Who then is this?"[208] Regardless of whether one sees anthropomorphism in this account, the clearest idea expressed is that of Jesus' demonstration of power through miracle. This in turn issues in varied responses which are usually formulated into a question regarding his identity.

The next story is not as explicit in regard to the hearing and seeing motif, but it contributes to the motif by way of the description of various reactions and responses to Jesus' power and authority. Jesus, and presumably his disciples, set out by boat again and arrive on the other side of the sea, landing in the region of the Gerasenes (or Gadarenes),

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[205] Citations are taken from France, 221.

[206] Cranfield sees the connection as being between ὑπακούει in 4:41 and the ἐξουσία of Jesus in the exorcism story (cf. 1:27).

[207] This could also be in some ways parallel to the responses of other "minor characters" in Mark's Gospel, a subject that has garnered much attention in Markan studies.

[208] Cf. also 2:7-12 and 3:11-12. It may be too much emphasis for this particular context to call the disciples' question in 4:41, but it is at least in its formulation a more "insistent" and "sharply defined" (France, 221) version of the question which peppers the entire Gospel, culminating in the response of the centurion in 15:39.

that is, Gentile territory. After stepping out of the boat, Jesus is met by a demon-possessed man who was apparently known to the inhabitants of the region as one who had long been afflicted by demons. The demons cry out from within the man, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?" (5:7) The proclamation by the demons regarding Jesus' identity is one of the clearest and boldest proclamations of Jesus' identity, and they show their acknowledgment of Jesus' power by obeying and leaving the man and entering the herd of pigs.

As is the case following the previously recorded exorcism in 1:21-28, the reaction of the surrounding people is highlighted by Mark. They witness Jesus' power, not only over the demonic world, but over a man whom, because of the demonic power, no one had been able to subdue (5:3-4). Their reaction is recorded as that of fear (ἐφοβήθησαν), perhaps much like the disciples in 4:41 (ἐφοβήθησαν). In fact, the reaction of fear in response to seeing Jesus' power displayed in miracles is something that occurs often throughout Mark's Gospel (cf. 5:36; 6:50; 10:32; 16:8). In most cases, while it is an acknowledgment of the power and authority of Jesus, the reaction in these instances cannot be characterized as a profession of faith or belief in Jesus.[209] This certainly seems to be the case in this context, since the people begged Jesus to leave their region (v.17).

In contrast to the negative reaction of the Gentile crowds, the former demoniac is so transformed by the experience that he is not only "clothed and in his right mind" for the first time in probably quite some time, but he also wants to become a disciple of Jesus and follow him (v.18). The former demoniac, in a small way, displays the proper response to seeing and witnessing the power and authority of Jesus. In fact, he goes on to

[209] Hooker, *Mark*, 140.

preach (κηρύσσειν)[210] in the Decapolis, where the reaction of the mostly-Gentile populace was one of awe, a reaction that could be seen as positive (v.20). That all of this took place in a Gentile region is the most unique element of this particular exorcism in Mark.[211] By this we see Jesus' concern that he be heard and seen among the Gentiles.

Arriving back on the other side of the lake, Jesus is welcomed again with interest by a "great crowd" (5:21). He is approached by Jairus, a leader in the synagogue, who, "upon seeing" (ἰδὼν) Jesus, fell down prostrate at his feet. The use of ἰδὼν here could be a simple, literal use to describe the scene, but it is interesting that the man's stature in the synagogue is stressed (ἀρχισυναγώγων), and at the same time, he falls down at the feet of Jesus. His falling down could be read as his dire plea for help for his sick daughter, or it could also be a recognition of Jesus' authority, over against his own. What is perhaps clearer as the story continues, is that Jairus apparently continues to believe, since he remains with Jesus throughout his circuitous journey to his house. When messengers come from Jairus' house to tell him that his daughter has died, and so "Why trouble the Teacher any further?" Jesus admonishes Jairus to not fear but to "believe." Jairus apparently remains with him and goes on to witness Jesus' healing of his daughter. The example of Jairus could simply be another "minor character" in Mark who displayed faith, and in terms of the hearing and seeing motif, the contribution is perhaps minor at best. However, the reaction of the onlookers again is where we find a stronger connection to the hearing and seeing motif.

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[210] Hooker notes that it is normally used in Mark to denote preaching the gospel. Whether that is what Mark intended or not is unclear, but if Mark saw this story as representing an early mission to the Gentiles, it is all the more probable that the gospel is what he is implying. Ibid., 144.

[211] France, 226.

Marcus refers to the hearing and seeing motif as "looking without seeing, hearing without understanding," and he finds traces of it throughout the Gospel of Mark. His particular interest is in showing that there is, at the "very core of Mark," what he calls a "contrast between the realm of appearance and that of reality."[212] He points to Jesus' concern to proclaim the kingdom (1:14), and to the ministry of Jesus itself being a demonstration of the coming of the kingdom. This is what constitutes the notion of true reality, while the opponents of Jesus are throughout the Gospel "confident that their version of reality is true, and that Jesus' version is false."[213] As it was discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis, the secret is that the kingdom is here, invading the present age, and Jesus is the embodiment of that kingdom presence. Thus, true seeing and hearing consists in understanding that the kingdom has come in Christ. Mark's interest in placing so much emphasis upon the identity of Jesus consists in relating stories with deeper meaning under the surface. Marcus explains:

> The Gospel, with its mixture of styles, the abrupt movements of its story, and its "lack of descriptive detail and information that may seem essential to the story," is evocative rather than sensory, signaling that Mark is interested, not in the surface level of events he narrates, but in a deeper level. In Mark's own phraseology, these two levels might be called "the things of human beings"...and "the things of God"...(8:33)[214]

So when we encounter the onlookers, or rather, scoffers (κατεγέλων), in Jairus' home, we see Mark's concern to highlight not only the fact that they did not believe that Jesus could do anything for a girl who was already dead, but they believe that Jesus is simply wrong in his assessment of the situation. Jesus has told them that "the child is not dead but sleeping," though from a basic human perspective, it is clear that she is dead.

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[212] Marcus, *Mystery*, 112.

[213] Ibid., 112. Marcus cites 3:22-30 esp.

[214] Ibid., 112. Here Marcus quotes E. Auerbach, as cited in D. Juel, *Messiah and Temple: The Trial of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark*, SBLDS 31 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 44-46.

However, as the One come to inaugurate the eternal kingdom of God, "Jesus' vision looks beyond the immediate appearance of death, perhaps to the coming reality of the life he is about to bestow," and heals her. Presumably it is the small group invited inside the room where the girl lay who are said to be "immediately overcome with amazement." (v.42)

Two things, then, are significant about this story in relation to the hearing and seeing motif. One is the sense in which Marcus sees the broader theme of the reality of the kingdom versus the limited vision of reality as humanly conceived. The two visions clash in episodes like this, with the result that Mark's "evocative" narrative forces hearers/readers of the Gospel to consider their own conceptions of reality in light of Jesus and his identity and mission.

The second thing to notice in regards to the hearing and seeing motif is that the text explicitly says in verse 40 that the onlookers were "laughing at him," and Jesus responds by "throwing them out" (ἐκβαλὼν πάντας). Perhaps we are to be reminded of another house where Jesus was inside with those to whom he wished to disclose his identity and mission (3:31-35). Moreover, almost in the same motion as throwing the scoffers out, Jesus takes the father (believing?), mother, and "those who were with him" into the room to witness the miracle. Are they like others who are worthy of revelation, as opposed to concealment? Jairus has apparently heard of Jesus' authority and power, or he would not have come to him. His response of trust and faith stands in contrast to those who, though they have heard of Jesus and perhaps seen him do amazing things, become hostile to Jesus. That is, they are hardened further.

Mark 6:1-30

A further hardening or hostility, in response to having heard of Jesus and his mission is exhibited in the following section. First, it is those in the synagogue, in his hometown of Nazareth who, upon "hearing" (v.2) his teaching, "took offense at him," (v.3). Again, the passage is riddled with questions from hearers and onlookers regarding Jesus' identity and authority: "Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him?...Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary?" (vv.2-3) Again, the clash of visions is in play, with his own townspeople viewing him as merely the son of Mary and brother of their compatriots. Jesus' response to this lack of true vision is notable: "And he marveled because of their unbelief." (v.6)

Jesus does something remarkable in the next pericope (6:7-13). He commissions his disciples, those he has already rebuked for lack of understanding, to take part in his kingdom mission. Chapter 6 includes another Markan sandwich, where the mission of the disciples brackets a long story about Herod and John the Baptist (6:14-29). Again, if we view the middle portion of Markan sandwiches as playing a key role in the interpretation of the broader narrative (see previous discussion in chapter 3), there is something to this story of John the Baptist and Herod that could be relevant to the commissioning of the disciples.

The fact that the disciples have taken up the mission of Jesus, displaying the power of the kingdom in healing and exorcising demons (v.13), has apparently caused even more commotion in the realm of King Herod (v.14). Herod "hears" (ἀκούω) of what has been going on and the text infers that he is questioning among his inner council the identity of Jesus. The conjecture is that he is John the Baptist, raised from the dead,

or Elijah, or a prophet "like those of old." But King Herod's guess, having "heard" (ἀκούω is repeated) of this mission, is that he is John the Baptist, whom he beheaded, raised from the dead (v.16). The familiar pattern of hearing and questioning is found here to lead to the questions/conjecturing that will be repeated in the context of Jesus challenging his own disciples to discern his identity. Hearing and questioning also leads Herod to wrong conclusions, that is, wrong hearing. What seems to be the point of Mark's ensuing explanation of Herod's dealings with John (having him beheaded),[215] is that if this is what Herod did with John, will he not also do this with Jesus? As France says, "it is a sign of what the mission of the kingdom of God can expect from the kingdoms of this world."[216]

By placing the *inclusio* in verse 30, where the disciples report back to Jesus, thus providing the other enclosure to the sandwich, Mark seems to suggest that taking part in the kingdom mission of Jesus, as his appointed disciples, may put one in the same situation as Jesus. What was said in chapter three of this thesis regarding embodying the kingdom as true hearers who respond in obedience, comes through clearly in the taking up of the kingdom mission by the disciples, now called "apostles" in verse 30. Their hearing and seeing is now finding expression in doing what they have heard and seen Jesus himself do. Jesus will further reveal to them the dangerous nature of taking up his kingdom mission.

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[215] Kingsbury notes the significance of John in Mark, where he is shown as predecessor, and in that role, he foreshadows not only Jesus' ministry, but also his death. Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Conflict in Mark: Jesus, Authorities, Disciples* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 33.

[216] France, 246.

Mark 6:31-56

Having experienced kingdom mission as firsthand practitioners, the disciples are apparently tired. Jesus urges them to "come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." (v.31) The problem is that the mission has grown so much in popularity, that people are coming even to the "desolate place" to surround them. That Jesus has "compassion" on the crowds is significant given the earlier discussion on parables and Jesus' concealing of the truth from so-called outsiders. He is still interested in reaching out to people, and through teaching (v.34) and another miracle, he will again reveal something about his identity and kingdom mission to these hungry crowds.

Kingsbury is right to understand the "crowds" in Mark as a character playing a significant role in the narrative.[217] Mark does not necessarily paint a monolithic picture of crowds; they seem to play different roles in various stories. In terms of a response to Jesus, throughout most of the Gospel the crowd can be described as "well disposed" toward Jesus but also "without faith" in Jesus. Thus, they see and hear, but they do not necessarily understand. In general, it is agreed with Kingsbury that Mark seems to invite "the reader to adopt an attitude of sympathy and approval toward the crowd" throughout the narrative until the arrest of Jesus, at which point they will play a role in his being sentenced to crucifixion.[218]

Perhaps it was the disciples' fatigue that affected their attitude, but it seems that when Jesus tells the disciples to give the people (5,000 of them) something to eat, the disciples seemingly in a sarcastic tone reply with a question – "Shall we go and buy two

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[217] It is noted that this role is still subordinate to that of the disciples and opponents, however.
[218] Kingsbury, 21.

hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?"[219] The disciples' attitude is somewhat of an indicator of their incomprehension of what Jesus does by miraculously feeding the multitude of 5,000 people. Once again, Jesus involves his disciples in the miracle (v.41), and they still fail to grasp its significance.[220]

Many students of Mark's Gospel have noticed the similarity of the sea stories in 4:35-41 and 6:45-52. In both, we are told that Jesus desires to go to the other side of the lake, the seas are rough, and the disciples display fear in the presence of Jesus. In the story in chapter 6, the disciples have gone before Jesus, at his pleading, and they are startled and fearful when Jesus appears around four in the morning walking on the water, intending to pass by them on his way to the other side (v.48). Their fear at seeing him is perhaps based upon a common view that there were "spirits of the night" which brought disaster, especially in sea-faring contexts.[221] Lane provides insight from a saying in the Talmud: "Rabbah said, Seafarers told me that the wave that sinks a ship appears with a white fringe of fire at its crest, and when stricken with clubs on which is engraven, 'I am that I am, Yah, the Lord of Hosts, Amen, Amen, Selah,' it subsides."[222] Thus, when Jesus says to them, "Take heart; it is I (ἐγώ εἰμι). Do not be afraid," the wind ceases. When he enters the boat, the connection is clear: Mark is telling his readers/hearers that Jesus presented himself as the I AM, "Yahweh in sandals"[223] (cf. Exod 3:14).

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[219] This is one of the instances of impertinence previously noted in the discussion of 4:38. (cf. Lane, 176)

[220] More will be said on the significance of this miracle for the hearing and seeing motif when we come to the similar account of the feeding of the 4,000 (8:1-9).

[221] Lane, 236.

[222] Ibid., 237.

[223] The phrase is borrowed, with slight humor, yet also in seriousness, from Dr. Hans Bayer, Covenant Theological Seminary. This way of describing Jesus helps to capture the vividness with which the disciples are confronted with the holy One of Israel, the One whose name they were not allowed to utter, and yet one who stepped into their boat (in sandals, by the way) and pronounced himself as I AM. At the same time, however, this is not to confuse the personhood of Jesus as the Son of God, nor diminish

When Jesus, by his very presence (this time he does not speak to the sea), brings calm to the sea, the disciples are "utterly astounded, for (γὰρ) they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened." (v.52) The reason for their astonishment is ascribed to the fact that they did not understand about the loaves, that is, the feeding of the 5,000 with bread in the previous story. In other words, the disciples saw Jesus feed the multitude with bread, but they failed to understand the significance of that miracle as in some way part of Jesus' self-revelation. So, in 6:52, Mark could just as easily have said, "*for* they did not understand who Jesus was as Messiah." Lane asserts that it is entirely appropriate to see Isaiah 25:6-9 in the background of the feeding of the multitude in a "desolate place" (i.e. "desert"). For in the Isaiah context, the promise is that the Messiah would "feast with men in the wilderness."[224]

Having given the reason for the disciples being "utterly astounded," Mark says that they did not understand about the loaves, "but their hearts were hardened." This phrase seems to be a deliberate reference again to the obduracy text of Isaiah 6:9-10[225] quoted in part in 4:12. That Mark abbreviated the Isaiah version in 4:12, leaving out the notion of hardness of heart, should not lead us to miss his concern which mirrors that of the Isaiah context: that those who hear and do not understand, and those who see and do not perceive are also those whose ears are deaf, whose eyes are blind, and whose hearts

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Jesus' humanity as presented by Mark in his Gospel. Jesus is indeed the second person of the Trinity, and in this scene, he demonstrates that status.

[224] Lane, 232. Blomberg suggests further parallels with the experience of Israel in the wilderness: the crowds are likened to "sheep without a shepherd," that is, like the wandering Israelites in the wilderness; Jesus commands the people to sit down in "companies" (συμπόσια συμπόσια) on "green grass," the former echoing the description of "Qumran's preparation for the eschatological conflagration," the latter perhaps harkening back to Ezekiel 34:26-29; the miracle itself mirrors God's provision of manna for the Israelites in a "desolate" place; the entire scene, as pointed out by Lane, reflects a type of banquet to come. Craig L. Blomberg, "The Miracles as Parables," in *The Miracles of Jesus*, Gospel Perspectives, vol. 6, ed. David Wenham and Craig L. Blomberg, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 327-59.

[225] Cf. Evans for a full discussion on this connection. Evans, 106.

are hard.[226] Here we see Mark deliberately expanding the hearing and seeing motif, getting to the issue of heart-resistance to Jesus and his kingdom. The disciples' failure to recognize that God is at work bringing the kingdom in the person and mission of Jesus shows that they are not entirely different from the "outsiders" in this crucial element of heart-resistance to the revelation of the Messiah. The insight given to them into the secret of the kingdom does not supplant their need to "pay attention" to what they hear (and see). By including this story, along with the commentary on the disciples' incomprehension and hard hearts, Mark sends a strong message to his hearers/readers: that true hearing and seeing issues in obedience and a soft heart (i.e. receptive) toward Jesus and his kingdom mission.

Mark 7:1-23

Not only are the disciples' hearts hardened, but those of the leaders of the Jewish religious establishment are hardened as well. Mark describes the scribes from Jerusalem as having seen some of Jesus' disciples eat without washing their hands, something that Mark explains for his non-Jewish readers as going against Jewish traditions. His parenthetical explanation seems to have a hint of criticism to it, and the inclusion of Jesus' reaction to the scribes adds to the notion of criticism – they are "hypocrites," according to Jesus, because they think they are honoring God with their traditions, but in actuality, "their heart" is far from God. They "leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men." Here we see another Isaiah quote (Isa 29:13), this time introduced explicitly by the inclusion of Jesus' statement: "Well did Isaiah prophesy of

[226] This is how Mark presents the situation, in the indicative, though the context of Mark 4 also suggests the imperatival force inherent in the explicit imperatives of Isaiah 6 (See previous discussion in chapter 3).

you hypocrites, as it is written." The idea of hearing and seeing and hardened hearts is important in Isaiah (and Jeremiah), and Mark explicitly uses it here to indict the religious establishment, and implicitly to describe their lack of proper hearing and seeing.[227]

Having indicted the religious establishment, Jesus calls "the crowd" to him "again," saying, "Listen (ἀκούσατέ), all of you, and understand (σύνετε)!" The reader is reminded of 4:3 with the summons to attentive hearing,[228] and this time the call to hear is explicitly linked to the need for understanding. Like in 4:3, the summons to hear is followed by a parable – very simply put, Jesus says that what goes into a man does not defile him, for it enters his stomach, not his heart; it is what comes out of the heart which defiles him.

In another scene reminiscent of chapter 4, Jesus goes inside a house with his disciples, where his disciples ask him about the parable which was delivered to "all." Rather than starting with the news that the disciples have the privilege of being granted the secret of the kingdom and then rebuking them for not understanding (4:13), this time Jesus begins by rebuking them for their lack of understanding (v.18) and then proceeds to reinforce the message of the parable: that purity in covenant relationship with God goes beyond observing Torah; it is fundamentally about a heart disposition toward God. As France puts it, "It is...particularly with the heart that a person relates to God, and a

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[227] The indictment in this text makes even clearer Jesus' use of Isaiah in chapter 4 in regards to his teaching on parables. For, as Snodgrass says, "parables are prophetic instruments. They occur especially in contexts of judgment and indictment." Snodgrass, "Hermeneutics of Hearing," 69.

[228] Verse 16, "Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear!" is found in A D W Θ *f*1, 13 33 𝔐 latt sy, but is not present in important Alexandrian MSS and a few others (ℵ B L Δ* 0274 28 2427). It is omitted in most translations (included in KJV). Metzger suggests it is most likely a "scribal gloss (derived perhaps from 4.9 or 4.23), introduced as an appropriate sequel to ver. 14." The connection between this passage and that of Mark 4 is strong, even without the disputed verse. For this reason, the inclusion of the verse in the KJV is understandable from the context, but the textual witnesses simply are not strong. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament; A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament,* 3rd ed. (London: United Bible Societies, 1971), 81.

purported relationship which bypasses the heart is a mockery."[229] Thus, hearing and seeing is about recognizing the priority of the heart in relation to God and his rule, not simply in what is construed as a rote obedience to his commands. We have learned much in this study about the need for obedience as a sign of true hearing and seeing, but it is obedience with the right heart attitude that is needed. For with a hardened heart, true hearing and seeing is impossible.

Mark 7:24-8:10

The next scene, in an interesting way, seems to recall the revealing and concealing language of 4:21-25. Jesus is said to be trying to retreat from crowds by going to a Gentile region (Tyre and Sidon) and entering a house (7:24). However, we read that "he could not be hidden," even in a Gentile region. Like Jairus (the Jewish leader) earlier, the Gentile woman comes and falls at Jesus' feet, begging him to cast out the demon from her daughter. In Marcus' conception of the hearing and seeing motif, as mentioned earlier, what seems manifest on one level is hidden on another. In the case of the Syrophonecian woman, the woman "has an inkling of the kingdom's mystery; she does not take at face value Jesus' rejection of her request to heal her daughter, but sees the promise hidden in the rejection."[230]

Jesus returns from the region of Tyre, only to enter another region populated more by Gentiles than Jews (v.31). On the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee, he heals a deaf and dumb man, the first such occurrence in the Gospel of Mark. The man had been brought to him (presumably by some in the "crowd," cf. v.33). Next, in an action

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[229] France, 291.

[230] Marcus, *Mystery*, 114. Here Marcus relies on Luther's reading of this passage, as expressed in P. Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 57-58.

reminiscent of Jesus' private consultations with his disciples (cf. 4:10, 34; 7:17), or of the private group witnessing the healing of Jairus's daughter (5:40), Jesus takes the deaf and dumb man aside, away from the crowd (v.33), to heal him. Hooker seems justified in suggesting that the explicit nature of the private scene, along with the connection between deafness and Jesus' teaching on hearing seems to point to this healing functioning on a figurative level for Mark.[231] Thus, it functions on another level for Jesus' disciples, as well as for Mark's readers, showing that Jesus is able to heal those who are even spiritually deaf. The man is now able to hear and to speak of what he has heard and seen,[232] and the disciples, who are apparently hard of hearing (especially spiritually), are in need of similar healing.

Again, the miracle is followed by a comment from onlookers regarding Jesus' identity and mission: "He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak" (v.37), a phenomenon indicative of the blessing which will come about from God's eschatological coming (cf. Isa 35:5-6).[233] This view forward, at least on the part of the narrator, is to the blessings of the coming kingdom, and as such, it is perhaps another hint at what Marcus defines as true seeing: "True seeing...sees not the way things appear to be *now*, but the way they *will be*."[234] It is a reaching forward, by seeing the here-and-now foretastes of the consummated kingdom to come. It is to see something of the true nature of the kingdom as inaugurated now in Jesus, and it is an expression of faith in the

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[231] Hooker, *Mark*, 186.

[232] Ibid., 184. Hooker also suggests, as it will be shown in this study, that the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida in 8:22-26 functions in the same way, providing a complementary idea – that of seeing.

[233] France, 304. This view forward to the blessings of the coming kingdom is perhaps another hint at what Marcus defines as true seeing: "True seeing...sees not the way things appear to be now, but the way they will be." Marcus, *Mystery*, 113.

[234] Marcus, *Mystery*, 113.

blessings of the consummation to come.[235] Thus, the healing could, or perhaps should, function to reveal to the disciples and others, as well as to hearers/readers of the Gospel, that Jesus is that long-awaited Messiah.

As France notes, it seems that Jesus is still on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee when we encounter the next feeding miracle in 8:1-9.[236] Thus, he is still ministering among mostly Gentiles, and so the long history of interpretation of these parallel accounts shows that at least since Augustine, the Church has taken these accounts as referring to Jesus' feeding of Jews (6:31-44) and also Gentiles (8:1-9).[237] Again, Jesus is said to have compassion on the people, and he desires to feed them. The same word, ἐρημος, "desert" or "wilderness," used twice in the previous feeding story, is used again here, this time solely by the disciples. They ask Jesus, "How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate (ἐρημίας) place?" If by the use of (ἐρημος) Mark intends to maintain the connection to the eschatological feast in the consummated kingdom (cf. Isa 25:6-9), the racial composition being perhaps better described as mixed (Jew and Gentile) would suggest that, quite possibly, both Jew and Gentile followers of Jesus sitting down to eat together "prefigured Jesus' intention for the Church."[238] It is also important to note Jesus' concern for revealing his identity, again through the medium of miracle, particularly among a primarily Gentile audience.

More importantly for our study, however, the disciples' question in response to Jesus' statements of concern for the people to eat, again reveals their obduracy. They

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[235] In his conception of the sequencing parallels between the narrative as presented in 6:31-7:37 and that presented in 8:1-30, Lane calls 7:37 a "confession of faith," parallel to Peter's confession in 8:27-30. Cf. Lane, 269.

[236] There is no sign of going anywhere, and thus no explicit reference to being among Gentiles. The next geographical comment comes in verse 10, where Jesus gets into a boat again and goes to the district of Dalmanutha. France, 305.

[237] Hooker, *Mark*, 187.

[238] Lane, 275.

have already been with Jesus in the ἐρημος among multitudes (1,000 more in the previous account), and they are still asking a similar, unbelieving question, one that again shows their impertinence (see previous discussion on 6:37). Blomberg suggests that Matthew's version of the question in Matt 15:33, with its emphasis on "we" (ἡμῖν),[239] perhaps shows that the disciples were not necessarily so utterly obtuse to ask such a question, having already experienced the first feeding, but that they were expecting Jesus to do what only he could do.[240] Whatever Matthew intended by his use of the first person and the placement of the pronoun, it is clear that Mark, especially in the broader context of chapters 4-8, intends to show that the disciples still do not understand. This will become abundantly clear in 8:14-21. Bread will again come up in conversation with Jesus, and the disciples' inability to see the significance of this miracle will become part of Jesus' lesson for them.

Summary of Hearing and Seeing in Mark 4:35-8:10

Since the hearing and seeing motif is perhaps easier to recognize in 4:1-34 and 8:11-26 of Mark, it may be helpful to provide some summary comments which will delineate how our understanding of the motif is informed and expanded in this middle

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[239] The full question is: πόθεν ἡμῖν ἐν ἐρημίᾳ ἄρτοι τοσοῦτοι ὥστε χορτάσαι ὄχλον τοσοῦτον; Blomberg notes that the pronoun is in an emphatic position at the beginning of the sentence. Blomberg, "Miracles," 337.

[240] Ibid., 337. Blomberg offers this more as an explanation for why there are two feeding miracles, thus arguing for the authenticity of two separate incidents. He notes one of the common objections to this story, which is that surely the disciples would not be asking such a stupid question if they had previously encountered the same situation. Blomberg's explanation is perhaps probable, at least in Matthew, but as he notes, there are other (perhaps better) ways of explaining the authenticity of the two miracle accounts as separate events. He particularly notes D.A. Carson's comments on the issue in his commentary on Matthew's version. In those comments, Carson does make room for this explanation, but he also asserts that, "we must never lose sight of a human being's vast capacity for unbelief," an assertion entirely appropriate for either context, but especially the Markan. D.A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 358. For more arguments in favor of separate incidents, see Lane (271-72), where he also points out that one will have to reject Jesus' words in 8:19 if it is decided that there was only one incident.

section of 4:35-8:10. First, it is apparent that Mark is drawing on explicit hearing and seeing motif language in his storytelling, such as the use of ἀκούω in 4:41, the language of hardened hearts from Isaiah 6:9-10 in 6:52, the language of "heart" in 7:6-7 (and 7:14-23), the numerous parallels in the discourse on purity in 7:14-23 to the parable discourse in chapter 4, and the healing of the deaf and dumb man in 7:31-37. Secondly, and perhaps less explicit, is that of the notion of competing visions of reality, as shown in the story of the healing of Jairus's daughter (5:21-24; 35-43), the story of the Syrophonecian woman's faith (7:24-30), and at some level, the two feeding miracles, where the disciples simply see an impossible situation of feeding thousands of hungry people, whereas Jesus is perhaps pictured as looking toward the consummation of the kingdom (6:31-44; 8:1-9).

In addition to the above listed elements of the motif, throughout these chapters is the ongoing conversation between Jesus and his disciples, as well as scene after scene where Mark shows the incomprehension of the disciples through their reactions and words. The obduracy of the disciples has long been a recognized theme in Mark, but what has been shown in this study is specifically how the motif of hearing and seeing helps to describe their incomprehension. They have gone from being described as those who are let in on the secret in chapter 4, and thus those who somehow should hear correctly, to those who are in need of being healed of deafness at the end of chapter 7. They are also rebuked by Jesus several times for their incomprehension (4:13, 40; 7:18) and described as having hard hearts (6:52). However, they are also commissioned to take up a role in propagating Jesus' good news of the kingdom, having been given authority. Yet in this embodied response, which seems to illustrate the goal of right hearing and seeing, we learn that they could end up like John the Baptist because of their obedience. Still, they

fail to grasp the significance of the miraculous feeding of the multitudes, a point which will be driven home further in 8:11-30. Lastly, particularly in the narratives in 7:24-8:10, we learn that Jesus' concern for people to hear and see him and to experience the coming of the kingdom extends beyond ethnic borders to include Gentiles, and this is part of what the disciples should see and understand.

Chapter 5: Hearing and Seeing in Mark 8:11-26

Placement of 8:11-26 in Mark's Narrative

As it has been postulated thus far in this study, the motif of hearing and seeing begins to take shape earlier, but it is most explicit in Mark 4-8. The dominance of the idea of hearing in Mark 4, in conjunction with Jesus' teaching in parables, establishes what it means to truly hear and see the truth embodied in Jesus. From 4:35 to 8:10, the motif is developed in various ways, but in 8:11-26 it climaxes with a recapitulation of hearing and seeing language and ideas from chapter 4, leading up to a turning point in the Gospel – Jesus' pointed question to the disciples, a question which forces them to articulate who Jesus is according to what they have seen and heard. They have seen Jesus minister and heard him teach about the kingdom, now they must answer his question: "Who do you say that I am?" (8:29). Moreover, an implicit question is posed to the disciples regarding their own self-perception. This will be shown particularly in the exegesis of 8:22-26.

Mark 8:11-26 plays a significant role in the narrative of Mark 4-8, functioning like an *inclusio* with chapter 4, though also as a checkpoint at which we see the state of the disciples' comprehension and their understanding of Jesus as it has progressed, or perhaps digressed, since chapter 4. In light of its importance, then, 8:11-26 will receive separate treatment in this study, though its prominence should not diminish the presence

of the motif in other contexts. Rather, it should highlight how the motif has been developed throughout chapters 4-8.

Confrontation With the Pharisees (8:11-13)

Jesus has come to the district of Dalmanutha (v.10), where he is confronted again by the Pharisees. As Lane notes, the reader should understand Jesus to be on the western side of the lake, which is confirmed by their subsequent journey to "the other side" and on to Bethsaida (cf. 8:13, 22).[241] In this confrontation, then, we see in Mark's telling of the story that Jesus left the western, Jewish side of the lake after arguing with the Pharisees (7:1-23, 24), and when he returns to this region, their confrontation continues.[242]

The Pharisees, as the reader knows, have already seen Jesus do miraculous things, but they ask him for a "sign from heaven" (v.11). Jesus, knowing (as the reader does) that they have not asked because they truly want to believe, but because they want to "test" him, responds with exasperation: "Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation!" (v.12) The Pharisees have asked for a sign which will prove, once and for all, that God himself is behind Jesus' mission.[243] The question is about authority and whose version of the story of God's redemption of his people is true – Jesus', or the Pharisees'? They have challenged Jesus' authority throughout Mark's Gospel, and at this point the hearer/reader will not be left in "doubt about the nature of Jesus' conflict with the religious authorities and the course it will

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[241] Lane, 276.
[242] Malbon, "How Does the Story Mean?," 52.
[243] Kingsbury, *Conflict in Mark*, 75.

take."[244] Here we have another example of Mark presenting competing visions. The Pharisees are convinced that they are the authoritative agents of the mission of God. That is, they are convinced of their own vision of messianic expectation. Conversely, Jesus shows that he is the true authoritative agent of God's mission.[245]

Not only do we see competing visions, but we also see a lack of vision on the part of the Pharisees, an impediment due to their hardened hearts, as Jesus will infer in his comments to his disciples in the following conversation. In light of the hearing and seeing motif and its prominence in these chapters of intensification (4-8), it is clear that the Pharisees' request for a sign is a request to see something that is not in their prerogative to see. Jesus has already revealed himself, and the Pharisees, like anyone else, are expected to take God's revelation in Jesus as is. However, their hardness of heart is apparent, as they display both their hostility and spiritual blindness in their request for an additional sign. As Malbon explains, "To ask for a sign is to demand that divine power be present on one's own terms rather than to perceive it wherever it manifests itself."[246]

Confronting the Disciples (8:14-21)

Having left the unbelieving Pharisees, Jesus comes to the other side of the lake. That the disciples have not understood the miracles of the feeding of the multitudes is

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[244] Ibid., 75-76.

[245] This conflict of visions is clear from early on in the Gospel, where Jesus is said to teach with authority, not like the scribes. (cf. 1:22) Ibid., 75.

[246] Malbon, "How Does the Story Mean?," 52. Malbon suggests that there is a distinction between the use of σημεῖα and δυνάμει in Mark's Gospel, though others have not drawn such a fine line between the two phenomena. σημεῖα is first used in this context in Mark, and afterward used only sparingly, not referring to Jesus' miracles (13:4,22; 16:17,20). France, (e.g. 319) however, draws no such distinction, and uses "sign" as something that has already been displayed for the Pharisees to see, but they do not perceive the significance of the signs.

apparent, as Jesus points out in this section. The idea that the Pharisees, as well as Jesus' disciples, should understand something about Jesus and his messianic identity and mission is clear. What perhaps is not entirely clear to us as we seek to interpret Mark is how the miracles should function as revealing something which should be understood. In some ways, this question has been answered in the preceding exegetical discussion. For example, we learned that miracles demonstrate the nature of the coming kingdom, or point in some way to the consummation of the kingdom. This is particularly apparent when Jesus says or does things that echo OT and prophetic language, such as when he walks on water and proclaims that he is "I AM" (6:52), or the feedings of the multitudes, where he uses language reminiscent of Israel's wanderings and hoped for blessing at God's eschatological coming. Thus, on one level, miracles offer messianic authentication. However, there is an additional way in which miracles function, which provides an explanation for Jesus' rebuke of the disciples for not understanding his miracles.

In Mark, as in the other Synoptics, miracles often function like parables, and as such, they are not always readily understood. That is, if parables function either to reveal or conceal, then so do miracles, for they are often presented in a parabolic sense. In his essay on Jesus' miracles as parables, Blomberg quotes van der Loos as saying this in regard to the nature of miracles in the Gospels:

> We do not regard miracles primarily as signs, seals, additions, attendant phenomena, or however they are described, but...as a function sui generis of the kingdom of God...*miracles happen if the kingdom of God proceeds to function in deeds, just as parables 'happen' if it functions in words.*[247]

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[247] Blomberg, "Miracles," 329, quoting H. van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus* (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 250-51, 701-02. My emphasis.

Similarly, Snodgrass can say that a hermeneutics of hearing means that sometimes what we see is what we are called to "hear."[248] As we see miracles functioning like parables in the Gospels, then, we see the motif of hearing and seeing as a tandem idea involving both senses. Jesus revealed himself in both word and deed, and often this was through parables and miracles. In this way, "Whoever has ears to hear, hear!" should be taken to describe a call to attentive hearing *and* seeing. That is precisely the dynamic at work in this chapter. Jesus calls on the disciples to hear and see what he has been doing, what he is saying, and to understand who he is as Messiah. This, in turn, involves welcoming and accepting him and his messianic mission.

Thus, as the disciples are talking in the boat about how they had forgotten bread, Jesus admonishes them: "Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." In this admonishment, particularly with the use of (ὁρᾶτε, βλέπετε) one is reminded of Jesus' exhortation to the disciples in 4:24 – "Pay attention to what you hear!" (βλέπετε τί ἀκούετε). This time, Jesus admonishes them to beware of what has caused the Pharisees and Herodians[249] to be so hostile to him and his mission: "the refusal to recognize and accept the truth," due to hardness of heart.[250] Thus, the urgency of Jesus' admonition to the disciples is due to the fact that hostility springs from a

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[248] Snodgrass, "Hermeneutics of Hearing," 60.

[249] Literally, "the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod," is understood as referring to both the Pharisees and Herodians, as in 3:6 and 12:13. The textual variant – τῶν Ηρωδιανῶν – most likely a copyist substitution in P^{45} and other MSS, captures the sense of what is intended.

[250] Hooker, *Mark*, 195. The Pharisees throughout Mark's Gospel have only shown hostility, and the brief narrative about Herod in chapter 6 shows that Mark saw Herod's posture toward Jesus as one of hostility. Thus, it seems reasonable that there are not two types of leaven of which the disciples need to be aware, but one – hostility. The real question, as expressed above, is that of the underlying cause of their hostility, as Hooker points out. Cf. Hooker's discussion, *Mark*, 194-95. The leaven notion is notoriously difficult to interpret. Lane sees it as being very closely tied to the Pharisees' demand for a sign, and thus, asking for signs instead of exhibiting faith in what Jesus is revealing about himself, apart from signs, is Jesus' concern. Cf. Lane, 281. Though perhaps correct, this interpretation seems a bit truncated (asking for a sign seems to be a surface issue showing the corrupt nature of the Pharisees' hearts and their outward hostility toward Jesus). It also seems unlikely that the mention of Herod is connected with his desire to see a sign, something recorded by Luke (23:8).

hardened heart and that the disciples seem to be infected by the leaven of hardness. Mark interestingly places Jesus' exhortation between his narration of the disciples' conversation about having forgotten bread and their ensuing conversation about the fact that they had no bread (v.16). They seem to be thoroughly preoccupied with the lack of bread, tuning Jesus out, concerned instead about their own physical needs.[251] Overhearing their misguided conversation, Jesus asks them, "Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand?" (v.17)

This is the third significant "sea" incident in chapters 4-8, a pattern which Malbon has noticed. The three incidents (4:35-41; 6:45-52; 8:14-21) all consist of interaction between Jesus and his disciples regarding Jesus' deeds and his identity. All three include commentary on the disciples' lack of understanding – "Have you still no faith?" (4:40); "...for they did not understand about the loaves, for their hearts were hardened." (6:52); "Do you not yet perceive or understand?" (8:17) All three include elements of the hearing and seeing motif, which is applied to the disciples in their relation to Jesus. Twice, the narrative concludes with a significant rhetorical question regarding Jesus' identity and his disciples' understanding (4:41; 8:21). Malbon's vivid description of the echoes is worth quoting at length:

> This dialogue (8:14-21) is not just another conversation between Jesus and the disciples. It is a careful, symbolic drawing together of themes that have been developed since 4:1. The implied reader's ears ring with echoes: the sea, the boat, loaves of bread, hardened hearts, eyes that do not see, ears that do not hear, five thousand, twelve baskets, four thousand, seven baskets, understand? So many things have happened, and then happened again in a different setting. Jesus tells a parable to all, and then explains it

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[251] Hooker notes that the use of διαλογίζομαι probably is Mark's way of intentionally describing the disciples' conversation as the kind which "stems from unbelief," as the verb is used to describe the deliberations of Jesus' opponents in 2:6,8; 11:31. She notes that it is used again to describe the disciples' unbelief in 9:33. Hooker, *Mark*, 195.

> to some. Jesus heals and feeds at home, and then far beyond. There is much to hear and see, to perceive and understand.[252]

Much of 8:14-26 is a recapitulation of these same ideas. Thus, the cluster of questions: "Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember?" Jesus poses a total of eight questions to his disciples in the span of only eight verses. In this set of questions, Jesus takes the disciples' discussion about bread and turns it into a teaching moment, arresting their attention with questions that are more like indictments. The quotation, "Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear?" recalls 4:12 (and by extension, Isa 6:9-10).[253] The difference this time is that 4:12c is not mentioned – "lest they repent and be forgiven." It is apparent, then, that "disciples can fall into 'looking without seeing' for a time without ceasing to be disciples."[254]

Jesus' questioning and admonishment of the disciples leads into an explanation of what he wants them to understand about the miraculous feeding of the multitudes. If the miracle of the feeding of the 4,000 in 8:1-9 is in part intended as a parable for the disciples to understand, a reading which seems appropriate considering Jesus' expressed desire for the disciples to understand something about it, then this scene which takes

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[252] Malbon, "How Does the Story Mean?," 52-53.

[253] Though France rightly notes that the wording is actually closer to Jer 5:21, Ezek 12:2, and Ps 115:5-6. France, 317. So also Hooker, *Mark*, 196. If Mark had Jeremiah in mind, the absence of the notion of no opportunity for repentance (as in 4:12c) is explained by the wording of the Jeremiah text – "Hear this, O foolish and senseless people, who have eyes, but see not, who have ears, but hear not." The notion of obduracy, with an enduring opportunity for rehabilitation, is more readily found in the Jeremiah text than in the immediate context of Isaiah 6:9-10.

[254] Marcus, *Mystery*, 118.

place in the boat could exhibit the same pattern we have seen before in Mark: parable followed by explanation.[255]

Jesus' explanation involves more questions than it provides answers. Though the text is filled with detail in terms of exact numbers of loaves and broken pieces, the emphasis seems not to be upon the numbers themselves, but on the fact that Jesus is prodding his disciples' memory of their own involvement in the miracle – mainly that of retrieving the leftovers.[256] This interpretation has in its favor possible support from the connection with Jesus' question to the disciples: "Do you not remember? (καὶ οὐ μνημονεύετε; v.18). Alternatively, however, one may see in the detailed numbers the magnificence of the miracle: five loaves for five thousand, with twelve left over; seven loaves for four thousand, with seven left over.[257] Either way, it is clear that Jesus expects them to see that God is at work in him and through his ministry to bring the blessings of the kingdom. Thus, Jesus asks them, "Do you not yet understand?" (v.21).

The Two-stage Healing of a Blind Man (8:22-26)

Many have seen the miracle of the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida as the first portion of an *inclusio,* with the only other healing of a blind man in Mark, that of Bartimaeus in 10:46-52, providing the second portion. The two pericopes frame a section of the narrative where we see Jesus predict his death three times (8:31; 9:30-31; 10:32-34), and it becomes apparent that the challenge to discipleship intensifies. On this view,

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[255] See Malbon's article, "Echoes and Foreshadowings," for an explanation for how this pattern is worked out throughout Mark's Gospel.

[256] France, 318.

[257] So Hooker, *Mark*, 196. Both Hooker and France deny the allegorical interpretations of some who see the Eucharist prefigured in the miracles.

the second incident structurally functions to close this section before leading into the passion narrative beginning in 11:1.

Others have put more emphasis on the fact that the healing in 8:22-26 functions in tandem with that of the healing of the deaf and mute man in 7:32-37.[258] This view sees the second healing as completing the picture of Jesus as the one who fulfills the messianic expectations of Isaiah 35:5-6 begun in the first healing. As such, the pairing illustrates the expectation that both those who are deaf and those who are blind would be healed, a pattern which mirrors the hearing and seeing motif throughout these chapters.

A third way of viewing this pericope is to take it as somewhat of an explication of what Jesus has just implied by his rhetorical question posed to the disciples: "Do you not yet understand?" In this way, the miracle story functions to illustrate the disciples' own need of healing for their spiritual blindness. In other words, it functions in a parabolic way as a message from Jesus to his disciples, or a message for would-be disciples who are hearing or reading Mark's Gospel.

It is the view of this author that this miracle functions in a number of ways at once, showing that all three of the above listed options are in some way true of this pericope. The miracle should be seen as having both a literal and a figurative significance for Jesus' audience (as well as Mark's audience).

Beginning with an emphasis upon the historicity of the miracle leads us first to the view that this miracle story functions together with that of the healing of the deaf and mute man (7:32-37) to fill out the expected prophecy of Isaiah 35:5-6. In this way, the literal healing of the blind man is a message to bystanders that this is the one, the long-

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[258] In particular, cf. Guelich, 429-31. See especially Guelich's discussion on the relation between these two pericopes as it relates to redaction critical theories.

awaited Messiah who "does all things well" (7:37). This is perhaps the literal significance of the miracle for Jesus' audience (and Mark's), as they observe his mighty deeds and are expected see him as the one in and through whom God is at work.

As for a figurative sense, the disciples (and would-be disciples who are hearing or reading Mark's Gospel) are to see themselves in the blind man, as he looks up after Jesus' first touch and sees people, but they appear to him like walking trees.[259] Jesus touches the man's eyes again, after which he sees (διέβλεψεν), and then he is described as seeing everything clearly (ἐνέβλεπεν). This last portion describes the fact that his sight was completely restored, as the aorist indicates, and then he sees (ἐνέβλεπεν - imperfect) everything clearly.[260] As an enacted parable, the miracle is a demonstration to the disciples that they are half-blind in their comprehension of Jesus' messianic identity and mission, and they are therefore also in need of healing. Johnson has noted that the verb (ἐνέβλεπεν /ἐμβλέπω) is one which means to see "into" something or someone, whereby someone may "understand a person or situation at a glance." Jesus, for example, in Mark 10:21 "sees" into the rich man's character, his heart that is.[261] This is important for understanding what Jesus is intending to communicate to his disciples regarding their perception of him and themselves. Additionally, of note is the apparently intentional detail used in the plethora of seeing verbs, which suggests a figurative way of showing forth Jesus' intended healing process with the disciples. They apparently have sight, but it

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[259] The progression is from ἀναβλέψας to βλέπω (along with ὁρῶ- his perception), where his sight is described as operative but impaired. Johnson argues convincingly, based upon NT and other usage of the verb, that ἀναβλέψας (also in light of the aorist tense) is the point at which the man's sight is regained. E.S. Johnson, "Mark 8:22-26: The Blind Man from Bethsaida," *New Testament Studies* 25 (April, 1979): 377.

[260] Ibid., 377. There is a "careful distinction of tenses" here, as Taylor notes. Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Indexes*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981), 372.

[261] Ibid., 378.

will be completely restored, such that they may see things clearly (in a continuous fashion). There are several cues from the text which support a figurative interpretation[262] of this miracle.

First, Mark is the only Synoptic writer to record the healings of the deaf and mute man and the two-stage healing of the blind man at Bethsaida. In fact, these two miracles are the only ones included by Mark which are omitted by both Matthew and Luke.[263] Coupled with the fact that only Mark employs the hearing and seeing motif so extensively and purposefully,[264] the themes of deafness and blindness inherent in the respective miracles should be taken to mirror the hearing and seeing motif with its accompanying concern for the comprehension of the hearers and witnesses of Jesus' words and deeds. Thus, what this means is that, along with a literal significance, both healings have a figurative application in Mark's narrative.[265]

Secondly, the miracle follows immediately after Jesus has reproved his disciples for not hearing, seeing, and understanding him and his deeds. The rhetorical question in 8:21 – "Do you not yet understand?" – leaves a pregnant silence in the narrative. What

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[262] In addition to the literal, as noted above. That is, the miracle is taken first as a literal healing of a blind man, the significance of which appears to be that of Jesus' self-disclosure as the Messiah who brings both hearing to the deaf and sight to the blind (Isa 35:5-6).

[263] Johnson, 370. This conclusion of course rests in part on an understanding of Markan priority, where Matthew and Luke are said to omit what is found in Mark. The present author holds loosely to Markan priority, but does not see the other evangelists as mere redactors. The point is that Mark is unique in his inclusion of these two miracles, and he seems to be intentional about linking the two healing incidents. Hooker also sees the similarity in language in the miracles, suggesting that Mark was intentional in tying these two accounts together. She notes "they brought to him...and begged him to...and he spat" as some of the clearest identical language. Hooker, *Mark*, 197.

[264] Johnson also notes this uniqueness of Mark. Johnson, 370.

[265] Guelich denies the idea that there is a symbolic meaning to the two-stage healing of the blind man on the part of Jesus. Instead, he proposes that Jesus is here pictured as the Great Physician, not the great healer, since the two stages reflect the work of a physician rather than a healer. He does, however, recognize that Mark has intentions with this story that apparently go beyond the intention of Jesus. He suggests that the remedy for the disciples' impaired vision is the work of the Great Physician himself. Cf. Guelich, *Mark*, 433-34. Contra Guelich, the view taken by the present author is that Mark's intentions as a theologian in this case are not different than those of Jesus, who, as the one who often spoke in parables, also used his miracles as parables. Thus, the view taken here is that it is the intention of Jesus first, and then also that of Mark the writer, that the two-stage healing functions on two levels: literal and symbolic.

follows is the story of this two-stage healing, which is riddled with the verb βλέπω, suggesting a strong connection with 8:18 in particular. Jesus has more to "say," through his actions, and once again he shows that he is intent upon his disciples understanding more, not simply reproving them for not seeing and understanding. Hooker rightly notices that the pattern here is similar to that in chapter 7: "Just as the story of the deaf man follows closely after a section where Jesus calls on men to hear and understand his teaching (and both Pharisees and disciples show that they have failed to do so), the story of the blind man in chapter 8 follows a section where Jesus rebukes Pharisees and disciples for failing to understand his miracles."[266]

Thirdly, it has been recognized that 8:22-26 may fit into a common pattern of intercalation, where the two-stage healing is "set between the failure of the disciples to see/understand and Peter's deficient 'sight' in his inability to understand what his confession of Jesus means."[267] The connection of this pericope with the following account of Peter's confession has long been recognized, but it is often debated whether it fits as introducing a new section or serves to conclude the previous. Taken as both literal and figurative, and considering that the figurative import of the miracle is that of illustrating the impaired vision of the disciples, the view taken here is that it serves both as conclusion to the previous section and introduction for the next.

It is interesting that many have seen the two-stage healing as a "pivotal scene"[268] in Mark, but there seems to be little agreement on its meaning and function in the narrative. However, in light of the discussion above, it seems that in its narrative role as conclusion to 4:1-8:26, the story illustrates the disciples' need for further healing of their

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[266] Hooker, *Mark*, 198.
[267] Snodgrass, "Hermeneutics of Hearing," 67.
[268] Malbon, "How Does the Story Mean," 54.

spiritual vision. That is, they have failed to see Jesus as the promised Messiah, and it will take the very work of God, as illustrated in the miracle, to heal them further of their blindness. They have shown signs of sight, but they have also shown that their hearts are hardened (6:52; 8:17).

As an introduction to the next section, however, the scene transitions to Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ, a confession that is not altogether adequate (8:27-33). Jesus has more to reveal about himself as Messiah; he is the suffering Messiah, as he will begin to explain immediately in 8:31.[269] It is to this that Peter strenuously objects, and Jesus then rebukes him for not "seeing" the plan of God, but rather having the interests of Satan in mind. The complete healing of the blind man points to a complete healing of the disciples' blindness, and it will not be until the resurrection that their healing approaches this fullness.[270] After the resurrection, they will see him "in a new way."[271] Kingsbury explains the significance of their seeing of Jesus post-resurrection:

> In seeing the risen Son of God who is one with the crucified Son of God, the disciples are finally able to appropriate God's "evaluative point of view" concerning his identity (9:7) and to "think" about him aright, that is, as God "thinks" about him (8:33d). At last the disciples comprehend who Jesus has always been: the Son of God whom God sent to die on the cross and be raised to eschatological glory.[272]

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[269] Frank J. Matera has argued convincingly for the two-stage healing as pointing to the disciples need of a further stage of healing in their comprehension of Jesus as Messiah. His theory, however, is that at the point of Peter's confession, the disciples "see clearly everything which has happened thus far in the narrative; they see that Jesus is the Shepherd Messiah. This is not to say that they comprehend the mystery of the suffering Son of Man." Frank J. Matera, "The Incomprehension of the Disciples and Peter's Confession (Mark 6:14-8:30)," *Biblica* 70, no. 2 (1989): 12. While Matera is right to note that the disciples (at least Peter) do seem to recognize some truths about Jesus' messianic identity, the present author does not agree with such a positive assessment of Peter's confession, which Matera sees as adequate (to this point in the narrative).

[270] Johnson argues for the resurrection as the decisive point in Mark, where the disciples' vision is fully healed. Johnson, 383. Marcus agrees with Johnson on this point, and cites Mark 14:28 and 16:7 to establish the veracity of this claim. Cf. Marcus, *Mystery*, 145.

[271] Ibid., 145.

[272] Jack D. Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1983), 173.

In some ways, in relation to this study on the hearing and seeing motif in Mark 4-8, the two-stage healing of the blind man at Bethsaida is paradigmatic for the motif. The disciples are those who have been given the secret of the kingdom (4:11), but their understanding of the kingdom embodied in Jesus is incomplete. That is, their spiritual sight is impaired and in need of healing. This healing will require Jesus' deep work on their hearts to reset their orientation from "the things of man" to the "things of God" (8:33-38), and it will also require the revelation of the suffering Son of Man who will give himself as "a ransom for many" (10:45). For, as Johnson says, "The believer cannot really know Jesus as Messiah if he is unwilling to acknowledge him as the suffering and risen Lord."[273]

Even then, the reader knows that at the commonly assumed ending of Mark (16:8), the disciples have not been described as having come to a point of healing in their comprehension of Jesus. Perhaps strangely for believers, the only person to whom Mark ascribes real faith in this suffering Messiah is the Roman centurion (15:39) who proclaims that, "Truly, this man was the Son of God." In contrast, Mark uses hearing and seeing language again as he describes the chief priests and scribes as mocking Jesus on the cross, saying he should perform another miracle by saving himself, so that they might "see and believe" (15:31-32). The reader knows at this point that they have seen enough, and that these are the people so vividly described in 4:12 as those who keep on seeing, but will never perceive; they hear but do not understand.

Thus, despite the warnings inherent in Jesus' words with his disciples in this chapter, the overall purpose of Jesus, and of Mark as the author, is of a pastoral nature,

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[273] Johnson, 382.

rather than a polemical nature.[274] The disciples are warned that their continued unbelief could develop into the kind of hardness displayed by the Pharisees (cf. 8:1-12; 17), a "calcified blindness" that causes them to see and yet not perceive, because "they refuse to see."[275] In this parable-like miracle, Jesus communicates to the disciples the urgency of paying attention (4:24; 8:15) to their blindness and hardness of heart, so that they might see him (and by extension, themselves) correctly. In this way, he is preparing them for his self-revelation through his suffering and death so that they will not miss the significance of it when it comes. They will need to hear and see what happens in the ensuing events, and in order to hear and see, they need to pay attention to the hostility toward the mystery of the kingdom of God that is latent in their own hearts.

[274] Ibid., 380.
[275] Ibid., 379.

Chapter 6: The Missional Thrust of Mark 4-8

A Rubric for Understanding

In chapter one of this thesis a basic definition of Christian mission was offered, borrowed from Christopher Wright: "Fundamentally, our mission (if it is biblically informed and validated) means our committed participation as God's people, at God's invitation and command, in God's own mission within the history of God's world for the redemption of God's creation."[276] The foundation of this mission activity of the church, as it was explained, is "God's own mission," what we termed the *missio Dei*. It is proposed in this thesis that in chapters 4-8 of Mark's Gospel, the motif of hearing and seeing functions to illuminate facets of the *missio Dei*, providing a glimpse of God's own missional intentions in Jesus, and thus also the missional intentions of Mark. It was argued in chapter one that Mark's Gospel is a missional document, and it will be shown in this chapter that what the exegetical and literary analysis of Mark 4-8 has shown is that the hearing and seeing motif illuminates the missional nature of the second Gospel, as well as the missional aims of its author.

To show this, it will be helpful to consider two rubrics. The first is based upon the work of David Bosch, as explained by Goheen. For Bosch, mission has three primary facets: word, deed, and embodiment.[277] If, as it was articulated in chapter one, mission is as broad as God's redemption, the facets of word, deed, and embodiment also describe

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[276] Wright, *Mission of God*, 22-23.

[277] Goheen, 251. Goheen explains that Bosch does not use these exact terms, but the concepts are clear in his thought (cf. Ibid., 251n105)

the breadth of what Christian mission encompasses. It will be helpful to offer another one of Bosch's definitions of mission in order to better explain the rubric and how it is helpful for our study of Mark:

> The theology of mission is closely dependent on a theology of salvation. Therefore the scope of mission is as wide as the scope of salvation; the latter determines the former. According to Scripture salvation is cosmic...It is, in a very real sense, recreation, new creation...One biblical word for this restoration is the Kingdom of God; it refers to the deliverance of humanity from sin, evil structures and brokenness...Mission serves the Kingdom, proclaims it, and gives expression to it.[278]

In this definition, Bosch's focus is upon the church's role in missions. However, it will be shown in the following discussion that Mark's concern is two-sided. That is, the motif of hearing and seeing in Mark 4-8 shows both the mission of God and God's intentions for the church in participating in that mission.[279] Thus, this first rubric of word, deed, and embodiment will provide a structure for the ensuing discussion on the missional thrust of Mark 4-8.

A second, complementary rubric for our study corresponds to the first. This one is borrowed from the field of hermeneutics, and in particular, speech act theory as proposed by Kevin Vanhoozer. When explaining the task of interpreting Scripture, Vanhoozer suggests that it is helpful to remember that Scripture can be likened to a speech act in the sense that God is intent upon communicating something to someone, with the intention of accomplishing something and eliciting a response. This fact, in and of itself, is important for our study, for as it was described in different terms in the first chapter, the very fact that God seeks to communicate with his people shows the intentions of a missional God,

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[278] David Bosch, "Mission and Evangelism: Clarifying the Concept," *Zeitsschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 68.3 (July 1984), 173, quoted by Goheen in ibid., 252.

[279] Both Goheen and Bosch would agree that the dynamic of mission is always two-sided – God's mission and the church's participation in God's mission.

and in those missional intentions, God is not aimless. That the term for "understand" (συνίημι)[280] permeates the hearing and seeing motif throughout Mark 4-8 should alert us to the fact that Jesus is not speaking and acting for the sake of simply "getting the word out;" he is intent on accomplishing something. In order to understand what God intended to communicate, one must attend to three things: locution, illocution, and perlocution. Locution is primarily concerned with answering the question, "What does the text say?" Illocution is primarily concerned with answering the question, "How does the author say what he is saying?" and then, "What does it mean?" Perlocution is concerned with answering the question, "So what?" or "What effect or hoped for response on the part of the reader was intended by the author?"[281]

Thus, as it pertains to our discussion, the rubric of locution, illocution, and perlocution is a helpful way of examining the missional thrust of Mark 4-8, as we consider in particular the hearing and seeing motif in those chapters. The second rubric is complementary with the first in that locution corresponds with word, illocution corresponds with deed, and perlocution corresponds with embodiment. This correspondence is particularly helpful, since a discussion of the hearing and seeing motif in Mark 4-8 consists of considering how Jesus was communicating with his immediate audience, and then how Mark communicates with hearers and readers of his Gospel. The correspondences between the two rubrics are not always clean, but the point is not to defend the rubrics themselves, but rather make use of them to bring out the meaning of the text. There will also necessarily be ways in which certain facets of the text do not fit

[280] The term is used only 5 times in the Gospel of Mark, and each instance is directly and integrally related to the hearing and seeing motif (cf. 4:12; 6:52; 7:14; 8:17, 21).

[281] Vanhoozer's theory can be found in a number of articles, but he explains is more fully in his book, *Is There a Meaning in this Text?*

cleanly within only one facet of a rubric. Thus, there will necessarily be some crossover within each section. The corresponding terms of each facet of both rubrics will serve functionally as sub-headings for this chapter.

Locution - Word

As for locution – the "what" of the text, and specifically, the what of the motif of hearing and seeing in Mark 4-8 – it is imperative to understand the word or message that Jesus intended to communicate in order to discern its missional intent. Jesus begins his parable in Mark 4:3, stating: "Listen! A sower went out to sow." It was noted in the exegesis of 4:3 that the verb "went out" (ἐξῆλθεν) suggests a connection with the use of the same verb in 1:38, where Jesus is going out to accomplish his mission in the world. Simon Gathercole, in his study of the pre-existence of Jesus as expressed in the Synoptic Gospels, recognizes that in this use of the verb ἐξῆλθεν one may see an "allegorical reference to Jesus' coming from heaven."[282] Most commentators understand Jesus' parable to link the sower to God, as the one who has purposed to sow his word in the world. As a derivative application, the sower represents Jesus[283] as he has come to sow the word, just as he has done in the preceding chapters of Mark's Gospel, and he expects people to hear the word as he speaks it in the parable discourse of chapter 4.

In this way, the sower provides the starting point for understanding the missional thrust of chapter 4 of Mark. That is, it all begins with the incarnated God moving out into the world to accomplish the mission of God. It was argued in chapter one that the mission

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[282] Simon Gathercole, *The Pre-existent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark and Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 171. Gathercole cites the work of Lagrange, Marcus, and Witherington as support for this notion.

[283] See Blomberg's discussion. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 226-29.

of God must have theological priority in our discussion of mission. This is where thinking on Christian mission begins, and it is thus how the Gospel writers, Mark included, begin their accounts of Jesus, the incarnate God[284] and promised Messiah. He is the one who has come to inaugurate God's kingdom. Thus, Jesus announces in Mark 1:15 that "the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the gospel."

Jesus' call to hear what he is about to say in the parable is a summons to hear and pay attention to the fact that "the time is fulfilled" and the Creator God has come to inaugurate his kingdom, so those who are hearing this message should pay attention to how well they are hearing it. Jesus explains that some hear this message, and for various reasons do not continue to believe it, while others hear it and embody it, allowing the kind of kingdom life that Jesus came to bring to take root and flourish. The challenge to hearers is that they make sure that they are found to be in the last group described in the parable.[285] In this way, Jesus' preaching of the word about the kingdom speaks to his deeds as well, since in this act, he is seeking to gather a people who listen to his word and appropriate it in their lives, further propagating the kingdom as they bear fruit.

For some Jews, Jesus' presentation of himself as the one who speaks the word (4:14 - ὁ σπείρων τὸν λόγον σπείρει), comes as a long-awaited word from the LORD, a welcome word after a long silence. The prophet Amos prophesied to God's people in the 8th century BC: "'Behold the days are coming,' declares the Lord GOD, 'when I will send a famine on the land – not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD…they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the

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[284] John, of course, is much more explicit on this point in John 1:1-5, presenting Jesus as the incarnate Word.

[285] Hooker, *Mark*, 132.

LORD, but they shall not find it.'" (Amos 8:11-12) Not only would the people starve for the word of the LORD, but they would also be the objects of mocking from surrounding nations, due to the silence of Israel's God: "Why should the nations say, 'Where is their God?'" (Ps 79:10)[286] However, Moses had prophesied long before Amos that there would come a day when "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers – it is to him you shall listen." (Deut 18:15) In the NT, we see that Jesus is often presented like a new Moses (e.g. Matt 5-7; cf. Acts 3:22-23; 7:37), one who would "awaken in Israel the prophetic spirit."[287]

To long for the word of the LORD was also to long for his redemptive action (cf. Ps 79). This is why so many Jews struggled to hear the word of the LORD embodied in Jesus, for he was not preaching deliverance from Roman oppression. That is, Jesus' self-revelation in both his deeds and words did not match their messianic expectation. Consequently, they could not hear or see Jesus as Messiah. Perhaps they listened to Jesus' opponents, the Pharisees and scribes, or perhaps it was simply their own hardened hearts that hindered their ability to hear or see, but Jesus, in his earthly ministry, even vividly in the pages of Mark's Gospel, demonstrates the mission of God to inaugurate his kingdom in both his words and deeds.

This is what the people are to hear – the gospel embodied in and spoken by Jesus. They are not expected to understand the secret of the kingdom without the aid of

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[286] Raymond Jacques Tournay, *Seeing and Hearing God with the Psalms: The Prophetic Liturgy of the Second Temple in Jerusalem*, JSOT Supplement Series, 118 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 46. Tournay shows how it was the temple singers who kept the prophetic spirit alive in the Second Temple period, singing Psalms like Psalm 79 to remind the people of for what, or for whom they were to wait. See also Psalm 115:2-8 for the combination of speaking, hearing and seeing in the context of the mocking of the nations. In this context, the mocking is turned around to a mocking of the false gods (idols made by the hands of men), who are not able to hear and see. The psalmist then says that those who make these deaf and dumb idols become like them, and so do those who trust in them.

[287] Ibid., 55.

revelation, and so Jesus' urgent summons to hear and hear well, and to see, and see well, is a message to people to pay attention to what he is doing and saying, for it is in himself that they will see the embodiment of God's promises of redemption. In other words, the Gospel, or "word,"[288] is not a disembodied set of propositions, but truth itself about the real history of the world and God's redemption and righteous rule embodied in the person of Jesus. The "word" presented throughout chapters 4-8 is Jesus himself as the embodiment of the gospel.[289]

This is what Mark as an evangelist proclaims – that the kingdom of God has come in the person of Jesus, and therefore, one should not miss the work of God. His story about Jesus is the continuation of Israel's history, and the promise of the one to come. On this point N.T. Wright was quoted earlier, but it is worth repeating: "All [Synoptists] tell the story of Jesus, and especially that of his cross, not as an oddity, a one-off biography of strange doings, or a sudden irruption of divine power into history, but as the end of a much longer story, the story of Israel, which in turn is the focal point of the story of the creator and the world."[290] Peter thus preaches in Acts 3:22-23 that Jesus is the one promised by God through the prophetic ministry of Moses (cf. Deut 18:15), and Peter's admonishment is as follows: "It shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people." If Mark has indeed written his Gospel based upon the preaching of Peter (see discussion in chapter one), the severity of Peter's words is perhaps reflected in Mark 4, as we hear that those who are hostile to Jesus, the

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[288] See the exegetical discussion of λόγος in chapter 3 for an explanation of the term and its interpretation in this context as the Christian Gospel.

[289] Hooker, *Mark*, 132.

[290] Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 396.

outsiders, are even further hardened by Jesus' words, so that they will not repent and will not be forgiven (4:12).

So Jesus' ministry in word is presented as having two functions:[291] to reveal and to conceal, just as it was explained in chapter three regarding the nature of parables. In this ministry of word, Jesus urges people to listen carefully to his teaching, and his end goal is to gather a people who will bear kingdom fruit, carrying the cause of the kingdom forward in this current age. As for concealment, however, it was explained in chapter 3 that the severe words of 4:12 do in fact tell us that some of those who were hostile to Jesus were hardened further by Jesus' words. This in turn served the purpose of leading up to the cross, the ultimate goal of Jesus' earthly mission, and thus the mission of God, for Jesus says himself that he "came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (10:45)[292]

Illocution – Deed

In a fundamental sense, the hearing and seeing motif in Mark 4-8 speaks clearly to the issue of illocution. That is, it shows us how Mark says what he wants to say. Mark, uniquely among Synoptic evangelists, uses the motif to bring clarity to issues such as the self-revelation of Jesus, the revelation of the nature of the in-breaking of the kingdom, and of Jesus' teaching on discipleship. To understand how Mark develops the motif, it is important to remember that in some contexts in Mark's narrative to hear means to see.

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[291] Here we are getting into the area of illocution, but the point in this paragraph is to explain the nature of Jesus' words, that the meaning of his words is not always plainly evident.

[292] This is another of Gathercole's verses indicating pre-existence of the Son in the Synoptics. He notes that the "I have come" + purpose 'formula' is used for summaries of "Jesus' mission as a whole." Gathercole, *The Pre-Existent Son*, 85.

That is, would-be disciples are called to truly hear what they see in Jesus and his deeds.[293] In chapters 4-8 of Mark, what Hooker calls "acted parables"[294] play a major role in developing the hearing and seeing motif, and as such, they reveal the identity and mission of Jesus as Messiah.

To illustrate this method of Mark, it is helpful to recall a few examples. In 4:35-41, Jesus calms the storm on the sea, and the disciples are dumbfounded and filled with fear. Jesus' question – "Have you still no faith?" – and the disciples' question – "Who then is this?" – both point to the fact that the disciples are failing to comprehend (hear and see) Jesus as the one sent from God to inaugurate the kingdom. Though they have been granted the secret to the kingdom (4:11), and Jesus thus gives them insider knowledge throughout the Gospel with explanations of parables (e.g. 4:13-20) and miracles (e.g. 8:14-21), they are still called to understand what God is communicating through Jesus in his miracles, which speak of the in-breaking of the kingdom. In this particular context, it was noted earlier that the disciples' comment, "even wind and sea obey him (ὑπακούω)," points to the hearing and seeing motif, particularly in light of the use of anthropomorphic language in the context of the disciples' question and lack of faith. The idea is that nature's obedience, as a fellow part of the created order, demonstrates the proper response to Jesus as king and creator.[295]

The two-stage healing of the blind man in 8:22-26 is perhaps the clearest example of a miracle functioning on the additional level of parable. It is here that Jesus likens the disciples to the blind man after he has received Jesus' initial healing touch and can only

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[293] Snodgrass, "Hermeneutics of Hearing," 60.

[294] Hooker, *Mark*, 198.

[295] The reader is reminded that mission, as defined in this study, is indeed cosmic, and perhaps this incident in some way speaks to the full missional concern of God.

see partially. Jesus' deeds in this miracle on the parabolic level communicate first that the disciples do not understand Jesus as well as they should. This lesson was specifically, though not exclusively, aimed at revealing to the disciples that they did not understand the significance of the miracles of feeding the multitudes, miracles which are rich with missional intention – i.e. God's eschatological feast for both Jew and Gentile.

In confronting the disciples by healing the blind man in two stages, Jesus "holds a mirror up"[296] for them to see their own need of his healing. Secondly, Jesus communicates through this miracle his intention to completely heal the disciples' spiritual vision. In this, we see the mission of God not only to gather together those who hear him and believe in him (i.e. true disciples), but also those in whom he is at work to shape their understanding and to form them into true disciples and kingdom agents. As mentioned in chapter five, this project of shaping and forming the disciples continues in greater intensity in Mark 8:31-10:52.

Jesus' deeds serve not only to show that he is interested in shaping and forming a people who will follow him as those who truly see and understand, but they also serve to point to the presence of the eternal kingdom as it has broken into the present age. It was explained in chapter four that the healing of Jairus's daughter demonstrates two competing visions of reality – one vision is held by those who are blind to the presence of the kingdom, and the other is embodied and demonstrated by Jesus. The "outsiders" who believe that the girl is dead mock Jesus when he says that she is not dead. There are some who believe this version of reality and follow along with them in their perception and mocking. Jesus, on the other hand, takes a few people with him, apparently those who are open to seeing a different reality, and demonstrates to them by raising the girl from the

[296] Dr. Hans Bayer's phraseology.

dead that God's power is at work in the world in and through him, and he is the only one who is able to see into that new reality. In other words, he gives them a foretaste of the kingdom to come in the here and now, granting them a vision of the eternal kingdom of God in the midst of a broken world. This is what they are called to see, and Mark's careful arrangement of this story within the context of the hearing and seeing motif draws out the distinction between the two competing visions of reality.

Another way in which Jesus' deeds demonstrate the reality of the in-breaking of the kingdom in the present age is the way in which his miracles fulfill the prophecy about the coming kingdom of God. The healing of the deaf and mute man in 7:31-37, along with the two-stage healing of the blind man in 8:22-26, together demonstrate the fulfillment of the messianic prophecy given in Isaiah 35:5-6, where it is said that "the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped."

This in-breaking of the kingdom of God is what people are called to see. In other words, they are called to see the Creator God at work in his world, accomplishing his mission. It is to see what Bosch explained about God's kingdom mission: "[the kingdom] refers to the deliverance of humanity from sin, evil structures and brokenness."[297] The hearing and seeing motif in Mark 4-8, as it is found at work in the context of Jesus' miracles, functions rhetorically to reveal the kingdom to those with eyes to see and ears to hear.

Another facet of illocution which is important to recognize is the simple fact that Mark chooses to use the sensory language of hearing and seeing in his telling of the story. It was noted earlier that Mark's Gospel has been described as "evocative"[298] and one

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[297] Goheen, 252.
[298] Marcus, *Mystery*, 112.

which has been described as a "*communication*, involving invitation and response..." a narrative which is not that of "detached analysis," but rather one which is "an explosive revelation, a compelling invitation."[299] Its lively narrative also perhaps reflects its composition as being originally designed to be performed orally. Dewey's findings were also noted in chapter one, but it bears repeating:

> Rather than linear plot development, the structure consists of repetitive patterns, series of three parallel episodes, concentric structures, and chiastic structures. Such structures are characteristic of oral literatures, helping the performer, the audience, and new performers and audiences remember and transmit the material.[300]

The "repetitive patterns" noted by Dewey are obviously present within the hearing and seeing motif of Mark 4-8, the language of hearing and seeing itself lending to the orality of the repetition. As Malbon notes, the pattern of hearing and seeing language, woven together with the repetitive scenes of boats, seas, and loaves resounds in the hearer's or reader's ears, the repetition helping to drive home the point: listen, look, pay attention to what Jesus is doing and saying, and understand.[301] More study would be needed to understand how Gospels were read, or perhaps performed in the Early Church, but the tone of Mark's Gospel, along with the language of hearing and seeing, lends itself to being performed orally. This perhaps points to its being used by churches as a tool to propagate the gospel.

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[299] Senior and Stuhlmueller, *Biblical Foundations*, 214.

[300] Dewey, "The Survival of Mark's Gospel," 499, quoted in Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 233.

[301] Malbon, "How Does the Story Mean?," 52-53.

Perlocution – Embodiment

Perlocution, as it was explained earlier, primarily is concerned with response to what is being communicated. That is, it recognizes that the author intends to do something with his words in order to elicit a response. Thus, as Vanhoozer states, "The end of interpretation...is *embodiment*."[302] And so it is with the motif of hearing and seeing, which is perhaps one way of saying that people are called to "interpret" Jesus and his words and deeds. True hearing and seeing, as it is presented in Mark's Gospel, and as it has been explained in this thesis, issues in a response of obedience. This obedience we will call embodiment, since it is the life of the eschatological kingdom of God which is called for in true disciples by Jesus' words in his parable. Those who truly hear the gospel are those who bear fruit, a sign that the kingdom is active and breaking into the present age, even in the lives of individual followers of Jesus (cf. 4:8, 20).

When Jesus takes his disciples aside in 4:10-11 to explain to them that they have been granted the secret to the kingdom of God, and thus they are given the privilege of explanations, there is a sense in which hearers/readers of Mark's Gospel see that response is not dependent upon one's own ability to hear. However, as it was explained in chapter three, there is a delicate balance between divine agency and human responsibility in the motif of hearing and seeing. On the one hand, one may say that the ability to hear is given solely by God (cf. 4:11).[303] On the other hand, Jesus' summons to hear (4:3, 9, 23, 24), which is not always addressed exclusively to the disciples (cf. 4:3, 9; 7:14), rests on the assumption that responsibility to hear does in some way lie with people. Moreover, the related issue of hardness of heart is presented in Mark as something which is affected

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[302] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning?*, 440.

[303] The use of the divine passive (ὑμῖν τὸ μυστήριον δέδοται) is noted in the exegesis of this verse.

(even *e*ffected) both by the sovereign will of God (cf. 4:12) and by the human capacity for unbelief (cf. 6:52; 7:6-7; also the example of the Pharisees throughout). Therefore, Jesus admonishes the disciples to "pay attention" to what they hear (4:24) and to "watch out" for the kind of hardness of heart displayed by the Pharisees, for like yeast, it can come in and take over (8:15).

Thus, in order for the kingdom to take root in the life of a disciple, he or she must listen well to Jesus' words and pay attention to his deeds, watching out for the leaven of unbelief, lest it take over one's heart. Heart resistance, however, is described by Mark not only as something linked to the will of man. The issue becomes clearer when Peter makes his confession of Jesus as the Christ and we see that there is also an Enemy who threatens to blind the eyes of those who would seek to follow Jesus (cf. 8:29-33).[304] The presence and influence of Satan and his rival kingdom is present throughout Mark's Gospel, and it is shown to be conquered only by Jesus (cf. 1:24 – "Have you come to destroy us?").[305] The influence of Satan's kingdom shows itself in the life of the would-be disciple when it is apparent that one is concerned with "the things of man" over against "the things of God." (8:33) Thus, rooting out heart resistance can be likened, illustratively at least, to the exorcisms performed by Jesus throughout Mark's Gospel.[306] Furthermore, healing of heart resistance to God and his kingdom plan as inaugurated by Jesus, is shown to be something that only Jesus can heal (8:22-26).

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[304] The Apostle Paul speaks of this when he says: "the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." (2 Cor. 4:4)

[305] See Brower, "Who Then is This," for an interesting discussion of intratextuality in Mark's exorcism stories and how that unfolds Mark's Christological aims. Cf. pp. 297-300.

[306] By "illustratively," it is meant that Jesus' work in the disciple's heart to root out heart resistance is not a matter of exorcism, but rather in the same way that exorcism requires the unique and incomparable power of God, so does the eradication of heart resistance to the kingdom.

Thus, Jesus will prescribe a radical remedy for this heart condition: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it." (8:34-35) Jesus spoke these words just after his first prediction of suffering and death (8:31), and his message is that true hearing and seeing goes all the way to the cross, in solidarity with Jesus in his death, a dying to the self, which is committed to "the things of man" and not "the things of God."

Thus, true hearing and seeing in Mark has to do with the eyes of the heart, which, as Jesus explains, are in desperate need of his healing. In his quotation of Isaiah 6:9-10, Jesus had said that true hearing and seeing leads to repentance and forgiveness (4:12c). The repentant response of the disciple, then, is spelled out in graphic detail from 8:33 onward to the cross. The notion of embodied response is that of going the way of Jesus. The disciples have been commissioned by Jesus to enact similar foretastes of the eschatological kingdom of God (6:7-13), and in this way, they embody the kingdom cause. In "taking up their cross," they will embody the radical nature of the kingdom, which is the way of total abandonment of self and autonomous rule in favor of the rule of God.

It was argued in chapter one that Mark intended his Gospel for a worldwide Christian movement, not an isolated "Markan community." In his committed relationship with his disciples, Jesus shows his determination not only to gather a people who truly hear his voice and obey, but who embody that response in their commitment to God's kingdom. The message is one of calling, formation and mission,[307] and hearing and

[307] Goheen cites Bosch (*Transforming Mission*, 36) as saying something similar – "calling, discipleship, and mission belong together" – something which Bosch has borrowed from an article by

seeing Jesus properly is integral to each of these three facets. As Brower says, Mark depicts Jesus as "calling together a re-created people who will be God's holy people on his mission."[308] Mark takes this message seriously, aiming it at a large audience, particularly as he sees this "re-created people" taking shape in the form of the Early Church, a people called to live in light of the kingdom which has come in Jesus, and one which will not fail.[309] His message is a radical, missional message that speaks of a reality that is sure, but which is not always seen or heard.

Thus, the kingdom must be embodied by the church, so that others may hear, see, and understand. Returning to Bosch's definition of mission given at the start of this chapter, he says that, "Mission serves the Kingdom, proclaims it, and gives expression to it."[310] Serving the kingdom is to carry on with kingdom deeds of restoration; proclaiming it is to proclaim the word that in Jesus, the kingdom has come near, and in him is found forgiveness and inclusion in the kingdom of God. Giving expression to the kingdom involves embodiment in word and deed. As Bosch says in another place, "Mission means 'incarnating the Gospel in time.'"[311] To hear the words of Jesus, as he explains in the parable of the sower/soils, is to allow the word to germinate and produce life. The church, then, is called to a hearing and seeing that is characterized by an embodiment of the message of the kingdom. Vanhoozer explains the nuances of this well:

Rudolf Pesch, "Berufung und Sendung, Nachfolge und Mission: Eine Studie zu Mk. 1, 16-20," *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 91 (1969): 1-31. Thus, by "formation," it is recognized that discipleship is the common term used to describe Mark's concerns, but formation is used in this context for the sake of being more descriptive about one of the facets of discipleship as expressed in the Gospel.

[308] Brower, "Who Then is This?," 292.

[309] See the discussion in chapter three on the nature of the kingdom and how it is presented in Mark 4. In particular, what was noted is that part of Jesus' message, especially as expressed by the shorter parables of Mark 4, is that the kingdom is surely at hand and will flourish, despite any evidence to the contrary.

[310] Goheen, 252.

[311] Ibid.

> Jesus Christ is the preeminent interpreter of God's self-communication, the unique and definitive embodiment of God's self-communicative act or 'Word.' The church, as Christ's body, is a secondary and derivative embodiment. The Word seeks, by the Spirit, to be taken to heart, to be embodied in the life of the people of God. Scripture's warnings call for attention, its commands call for obedience, its promises call for faith.[312]

The importance of the parable of the sower/soils is crucial for understanding the motif of hearing and seeing in Mark and thus understanding Jesus' (and Mark's) intentions behind it. Again, Vanhoozer is helpful in articulating the relationship between the message of the parable and the importance of embodiment:

> The parable of the sower...is of vast hermeneutical importance, for it explicitly links the theme of discipleship to understanding. To follow the Word is to grow in understanding. Growth demands endurance, the prime requirement of the test of time. Understanding God's Word is a vocation: a call to mission and discipleship. To follow this Word may become a matter of death; it is certainly a matter of life and of living.[313]

Thus, part of the mystery of the kingdom in the present age is that God's kingdom is seen in the life of the church as it is made up of those who have heard and seen, and with repentant hearts, embodied that message in their lives, allowing it to flourish and multiply. For the fledgling church in Mark's day, or in any day, this may have seemed like an impossible or ludicrous task. However, as sure as the mustard seed becomes a tree large enough for birds to make their nest (4:30-32), and as sure as Jesus is able and willing to heal the hardness that plagues the hearts of men (8:22-26), so is the surety of the triumph of the kingdom mission of God inaugurated in Jesus, embodied and carried on by the church, and consummated at Jesus' second coming. Mark calls his hearers and readers not to miss what God is doing (and has done) in Jesus Christ; they must tune in,

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[312] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in this Text?*, 440.
[313] Ibid., 441.

listen, and pay attention, regardless of circumstances. If they miss this, they miss the kingdom and the missional purposes of God.

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis has been to discern the significance of the motif of hearing and seeing in the Gospel of Mark by tracing its development and narrative function in Mark 4-8. The end goal of the study was to determine how the motif contributes to a missional reading of the Gospel of Mark.

Chapter one began by defining what is meant by mission and missional reading, and the idea was put forth that mission is first of all God's mission, what we termed the *missio Dei*. The *missio Dei* is first and foremost concerned with God's mission to redeem a people for himself and to restore his creation, and as the primary derivative of that mission, the sending of the Son is paramount. Thus, the Gospel of Mark is a compelling narrative describing the mission of God in the world through the incarnate Son of God, Jesus, who was sent by God to inaugurate his kingdom (Mark 1:15).

The motif of hearing and seeing becomes explicit in Mark 4, beginning with a call to attentive hearing, to hear the words of Jesus, the one sent by God to inaugurate the kingdom, and the one in whom the kingdom mission of God is embodied. He explains that his call is to those who have ears to hear (4:9,23). That is, they are those with hearts that are not hardened or hostile toward him and his message. His message, and we might also say the overall message of the Gospel of Mark, may be expressed with the language of the hearing and seeing motif. It is that the kingdom has come near in the person of Jesus; therefore, one should listen attentively and look intently at the revelation of God in

Jesus, so that one does not miss the in-breaking and blessings of the kingdom. Michael Cook summarizes it this way: "For those who have eyes to see, ears to hear, and feet to walk, this is a story about the faithfulness of God embodied in Jesus and available to all who listen and obey."[314]

The narrative of Mark 4-8 resounds with the language and ideas of hearing and seeing, again and again calling readers and hearers of Mark's Gospel to pay attention to the revelation of Jesus, but also to the condition of their own heart-receptivity to the message embodied in Jesus. The first bookend of the motif in 4:1-34 is a call to attentive hearing of that message, such that one understands that true hearing consists in allowing the seed of the gospel to take root in one's life, which should then issue in kingdom fruit-bearing, such that the kingdom of God is seen and heard in the life of the true follower of Jesus. The intervening passages of 4:35-8:10 reveal that true hearing and seeing is about seeing through present circumstances to a vision of the kingdom of God, which is by faith. The true disciple understands that in Jesus, the kingdom is both now and not yet, and resistance to that movement of God in Jesus is evidence of a hardened heart. The second bookend of the motif, what we find in 8:11-26, tells us that Jesus is concerned with removing the spiritual blindness that plagues even his disciples, a blindness that is partial, yet desperately in need of being fully healed.

For the church, it is not until the coming of the Spirit in Acts, and the Apostles' public preaching that the disciples' vision seems to be significantly restored (Mark 13:11 might point to this).[315] Yet, for Mark's hearers/readers of yesterday and today the message communicated by the hearing and seeing motif, as it is so vividly illustrated in

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[314] Michael L. Cook, *Christology as Narrative Quest* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 70, as quoted by Malbon, *Mark's Jesus*, 257n85.

[315] Johnson, 383.

the miracle of the blind man at Bethsaida, is that understanding the gospel is not easy, "and you are not alone in your failure to comprehend Jesus."[316] We find a similar notion in the writings of the Apostle Paul: "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known." (1 Cor 13:12)

The Gospel of Mark looks forward to a complete healing of sight for Jesus' followers (and would-be followers), but the rhetorical force of the motif of hearing and seeing draws readers and hearers of the message into a clearer understanding of Jesus, while also leaving them hungry for more. Perhaps the idea for Mark's readers is that "they will 'see clearly' when they experience the presence of the risen Christ more fully in their own lives."[317] In order to experience this, however, the disciple will be called to a radical uprooting of heart-resistance, a process that involves following Jesus to the cross, dying to one's own self-rule and coming under the rule of God in Jesus.

Such is the mission of God, as it is expressed in Mark 4-8 through the motif of hearing and seeing. It is a mission that has as its primary goal true hearing and seeing. Followers of Jesus must watch over their hearts, always seeking to understand and to know Jesus as he reveals himself in his Word.[318] The dynamic of hearing and seeing is two-sided. On the one hand, one must pay close attention (cf. 4:24) to Jesus and his self-revelation, seeking to know more of him. On the other hand, followers are to pay attention (cf. 8:15) to the fact that they do not always see correctly or definitively. John

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[316] Ibid., 383.

[317] Ibid.

[318] Tannehill explains this, saying: "The purpose of the author and the response which he anticipates from the reader begin to come clear when we consider the author's shaping of the disciples' role as indirect communication with the reader. The author assumes that there are essential similarities between the disciples and his anticipated readers, so that what he reveals about the disciples may become a revelation about the readers and so enable them to change." Robert C. Tannehill, "The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role," in Telford, *The Interpretation of Mark*, 190-91.

Calvin understood the need for this self-critical approach to knowing both self and God when he opened his *Institutes* with a similar idea: "Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves."[319] This dynamic, as it is presented by Mark, consists in acknowledging how impaired our hearing and vision actually is, and in turn begging[320] for the healing of Jesus, so that we may know him better.

In chapters 4-8 of Mark, the apparent lack of understanding (faulty hearing and seeing) is essentially depicted as a "search for understanding," a search which, as Malbon suggests, is embodied in the disciples in the narrative of Mark's Gospel.[321] Through the compelling rhetoric of the hearing and seeing motif, and even the abruptness of the ending of the Gospel, with its lack of resolution on the issue of the disciples' understanding, Mark invites his readers to follow, to continue seeking Jesus.[322] This is not to say that Mark does not reveal definitive truth regarding Jesus' identity; it is to say that Mark is more interested in disciples who keep following after Jesus, listening for the word, and allowing it to transform them into kingdom agents in service to the mission of God in the world.

In this way, discipleship is mission, the mission of God to redeem for himself a people who will represent him and commend Jesus to a world in need, especially as his followers embody the gospel in their communities. Part of this embodiment, then, is an ongoing search for understanding, practiced as a community of faith in the present evil

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[319] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, Library of Christian Classics, vol. 20 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 35.

[320] Mark uses either παρακαλέω or ἐρωτάω to express the idea often translated by the ESV as "begged" or "implored." The word is found in almost every instance in Mark 4-8 where someone is begging for Jesus' healing of a sickness or impairment for him/herself, or for someone else. (cf. 5:23; 6:56; 7:26, 32; 8:22).

[321] Malbon, "How Does the Story Mean?," 53.

[322] Ibid., 53.

age. The urgency of Jesus' summons to hear becomes the call uttered by his followers to a deaf and blind world in need of the gospel. The embodiment of the kingdom by the community of Jesus' followers, though flawed by impaired hearing and vision, is perhaps the most compelling way of commending the kingdom. Moreover, the faithful, fruit-bearing presence of the church in the world points to a kingdom reality that will surely triumph.

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