

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

EXEGESIS: MARK 6:30-44

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Cor meum tibi offero Domine, prompte et sincere!

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Abstract

Jesus' feeding the five thousand is the only miracle that the four Gospels commonly recorded among the miracles Jesus Himself performed. The feeding miracle episode is like the gem, which changes light colors slightly depending on how people see it. However, some scholars try to approach it only in a particular direction and partially understand it. Based on the literary-historical-theological methodology, this thesis has a focal point to disclose the compressive and multi-dimensional implications. The exegesis of Mark 6:30-44 begins with the refinement of interpretive methodology. The methodology of this thesis prudently considers both the traditional perspective and recent research. Generally, this research is implemented in common exegetical areas: literature, history, and theology. Furthermore, literary research adopted a narrative criticism, considering Markan literary feature as a story. The feeding miracle can be seen as a well-designed dramatic episode that combines compressive scenes, and the sandwich structure gives an implied message related to true discipleship. Also, the diverse implied biblical imageries and symbols bring about the abundance of the message. The historical analysis offers new insight into the political situation related to the feeding miracle. Even though the crowd before Jesus and the readers of Mark might expect the Messiah to be the worldly king, Jesus had a different intention. Jesus had more compassion on their spirit, not the political situation. Theologically, two important Markan themes, Christology and discipleship, are well reflected in this miracle. The feeding miracle is the way to reveal Jesus as the Messiah. Mark presents discipleship by describing the interaction between Jesus and the disciples, giving an allusion via the immediate context. In conclusion, this episode converges in Christology and discipleship, being supported by literary connotations and compressive storytelling based on a certain historical background.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Statement of Problem

Heinrich Eberhard Gottlob Paulus (1761–1851), whom the Enlightenment influenced, argued that the feeding miracle did not occur by the supernatural power of Jesus, but it was done by the crowd's sharing their food with a compassionate motive.¹ The Enlightenment encouraged scholars to believe more in human reason than divine miracles, while opponents to this rationalism focused more on Jesus' divinity and power, thus defending biblical infallibility and exposing the falsity of liberalism. Definitely, the latter perspective is biblically right, and the former is not a sound perspective. However, this kind of debate, the liberal argument and the conservative's counterargument might consequently reduce the range of implications of the feeding miracle, affirming that the episode is just about rationality or divine power.

This thesis is about the exegesis of Mark 6:30-44, and it contains two critical issues, 1) what implications Jesus' feeding miracle has and 2) what the proper interpretive method is for understanding it. When seeing this miracle from a negative perspective, this supernatural miracle seems not to bring about any benefits for the faith of the disciples and the crowd. Even though Jesus had love and compassion on them with the supernatural feeding, the disciples easily forgot Jesus' power to perform the nature miracle in the following episodes (Jesus' walking on water and feeding the four thousand), and the crowd misunderstood Jesus and tried to make Him a worldly king. (John 6:15) Some readers might conclude that the feeding miracle failed, and the

¹ Mark Allan Powell, *Jesus As a Figure in History: How Modern Historians View the Man From Galilee*, Vol. 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 14-15.

misinterpretation of the miracle may result in arguing the worthlessness of the miracle. Because of this, people are tempted to interpret this episode as a touching story of sharing rather than Jesus' supernatural miracle. Therefore, it is necessary to find the implications more than the revelation of the supernatural power and reach a thorough understanding of Jesus' feeding miracle, specifically concerning the reason why Jesus had to perform this feeding miracle and what biblical implications this miracle has.

Also, this research involves refining the interpretive methodology for a valid exegetical result. Some discussions on the feeding miracle tend to focus on specific biblical themes, such as "new exodus"² or "symposium."³ These are useful approaches to understanding the episode in the biblical motif or cultural background but simultaneously limited in understanding the overall implications. These approaches tend to miss the different connotative meanings, ignoring the arrangement of the episode, having the limitation in disclosing the nuance related to geographical features and historical background, and failing to focus on the Markan major themes. A more comprehensive interpretive methodology is necessary to obtain comprehensive implications of the feeding miracle since the characteristics of the lens to look into the text are closely related to the results of exegesis. Therefore, the hermeneutics related to the text is the first issue to be dealt with in this research before jumping into the exegesis.

² Sun Wook Kim, "The Wilderness as a Place of the New Exodus in Mark's Feeding Miracles (Mark 6:31–44 and 8:1–10)" *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 48, no. 2 (May 2018): 62–75.

³ Jin Seong Woo, "The Feeding the Five Thousand Narrative in Mark 6:30–44 in the light of the Greco-Roman Symposium" *Korean New Testament Studies* 20, no.1 (Mar 2013): 97–128.

Statement of Purpose

This research has two specific purposes: 1) refining a synthetic and comprehensive methodology that is valid, and 2) doing thorough exegetical work via the established method. When saying that a certain interpretive result is valid, the final evaluation is based on that it has the valid hermeneutical principle and process. Thus the investigation of the methodology is an overriding concern before exegesis. The in-depth study of hermeneutics will explain why there are different interpretations concerning an identical text, and what interpretation is valid, and how to approach the text to gain a valid interpretation.

As the general rule for the interpretive methodology, the literary, historical, and theological interpretation will be employed to reveal the implications of the feeding miracle. Besides, story viewpoint as the creative approach, seeing Mark as a story, is importantly used here. As the preliminary work for exegesis, the overall research of Markan Gospel will be implemented in light of history, literature, and major themes. Based on the concrete information on Mark, following the refined methodology, this exegesis will disclose the diverse connections between the feeding miracle and the biblical-historical contexts. Consequently, it will arrive at the result that the feeding miracle episode converges in Christology and discipleship, which has a well-designed literary frame and is built on the evident historical context.

Literature Review

When it comes to the methodology of exegesis, this research follows the overall frame of the hermeneutical triad in Köstenberger and Patterson's *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology*. It shared a similar perspective with Berkhof's grammatical-historical-theological interpretation in *Principles of*

Biblical Interpretation: Sacred Hermeneutics. Blomberg and Markley's *A Handbook of New Testament Exegesis* provides specific guidelines for the exegetical process. Upon the overall frame of these scholars, diverse books are cited in this research, such as Porter, Bock, Fanning, Osborne, Vanhoozer, and Thiselton, etc. They have shed light on the specific areas in the exegetical philosophy and process.

In the introduction of Mark, the external shreds of evidence of the church fathers provide clues of authorship and the date of Mark. They commonly argue the authorship of Mark, who was the interpreter of Peter, but they give different suggestions concerning the date of writing. Church fathers' writings, Justin Martyr's *Dialogue of Justin with Trypho, a Jew*,⁴ Irenaeus of Lyons' *Irenæus against Heresies*,⁵ Eusebius of Caesaria's *The Church History of Eusebius*,⁶ Tertullian's *The Five Books against Marcion*⁷ give the necessary data for this discussion.

The genre of the Gospels is an interesting issue to debate among scholars. Strauss and Collins indicate the difficulty in defining the genre of the Gospels. This is an important issue to decide how to approach the literary aspect of Mark. To understand Mark's genre, Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie's *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* offers the

⁴ Justin Martyr, "Dialogue of Justin with Trypho, a Jew," in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 252.

⁵ Irenaeus of Lyons, "Irenæus against Heresies," in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 414.

⁶ Eusebius of Caesaria, "The Church History of Eusebius," in *Eusebius: Church History, Life of Constantine the Great, and Oration in Praise of Constantine*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Arthur Cushman McGiffert, vol. 1, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1890), 116, 172-173, 261, 273.

⁷ Tertullian, "The Five Books against Marcion," in *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Peter Holmes, vol. 3, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 350.

crucial perspective to this research. The authors were first to apply narrative criticism, which belonged to secular scholarship, to the research of the Gospel, and this book gives concrete methodologies. The story viewpoint is applied to the exegesis of Jesus' feeding the five thousand in this thesis. With the help of the narrative research that the book offers, it was possible to construct the episode matrix to observe the regular pattern of narrative elements and confirm what the author tries to emphasize as well as the literary integrity.

The comparison of Origen's and Calvin's interpretations in Jesus' feeding the five thousand is interesting. In Mark 6:39 (Jesus' commandment to sit down on the grass), Origen linked this verse with Isaiah 40:6, "all flesh is grass." He interprets the action of sitting down on the grass as making them humble before receiving the blessing.⁸ However, Calvin offers a different interpretation that includes more concrete reasons, considering the situation at that time.⁹ The Reformers totally rejected Origen's allegorical interpretation. That being said, Kim suggests a new possibility of allegorical hermeneutics based on today's highly developed hermeneutics, seeking the compatibility between these two different approaches.¹⁰ When the

⁸ Origen, "Origen's Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew," in *The Gospel of Peter, the Diatessaron of Tatian, the Apocalypse of Peter, the Visio Pauli, the Apocalypses of the Virgil and Sedrach, the Testament of Abraham, the Acts of Xanthippe and Polyxena, the Narrative of Zosimus, the Apology of Aristides, the Epistles of Clement (Complete Text), Origen's Commentary on John, Books I-X, and Commentary on Matthew, Books I, II, and X-XIV*, ed. Allan Menzies, trans. John Patrick, vol. 9, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1897), 433.

⁹ "Christ commanded that the people should sit down in companies; and he did so, first, that by this arrangement of the ranks the miracle might be more manifest; secondly, that the number of the men might be more easily ascertained, and that, while they looked at each other, they might in their turn bear testimony to this heavenly favour. Thirdly, perceiving that his disciples were anxious, he intended to make trial of their obedience by giving them an injunction which at first sight appeared to be absurd; for, as no provisions were at hand, there was reason to wonder why Christ was making arrangements that resembled a feast." John Calvin and William Pringle, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, vol. 2 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 234.

¹⁰ Jung Woo Kim, "Once again Looking into the Allegorical Interpretation of the Bible" *Canon & Culture* 8 (2014): 5-40.

historical-grammatical exegetical process is thoroughly implemented, if the conclusion from the allegorical interpretation fits into the implication of the whole context and messages, it might be plausible to accept the rather intuitive connection with the images in the Old Testament.

Back to Origen's interpretation, "He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass because of what is said in Isaiah, "All flesh is grass;" that is to say, He commanded them to put the flesh under, and to keep in subjection "the mind of the flesh," that so anyone might be able to partake of the loaves which Jesus blesses."¹¹ seems to be radical, but it is the possible conclusion inferred from analyzing the actions of the disciples. Jesus did not perform the miracle until the disciples gave up their initiative. The miracle occurred when the disciples handed it over to Jesus, perceiving that they could not do anything to solve the current situation and obeying His word. Origen's radical conclusion omits the detailed explanation. However, after examining the passage through the exegetical work, the connection of images of other passages in the Bible can be plausible if it does not break with the existing conclusions. Rather, the imagery connection might bring about an abundance of messages and give consistency with other messages in the Bible. Indeed, Jesus's feeding miracle arouses the many imageries, symbolism, and type-scenes in the whole Bible and historical events. This thesis seeks logical and reasonable inference, referring to various scholars, and it also employs proper imagery and symbolism research to the appropriate extent that scholars agree with.

The interpretive result is affected by the interpretive perspective of an exegete. Thus it is important to increase the legitimate frame for interpretation. In this respect, how Edwards approaches is beneficial to see the feeding miracle in the historical and geographical aspects. He

¹¹ Origen, "Origen's Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew," 433.

connected the miracle with historical revolution sentiments related to the location.¹² This interpretive clue can give new insight but a consistent conclusion with the other contexts. In addition, seeing the feeding miracle as a part of the sandwich structure may catch the other meaning of the miracle. Rhoads, Dewey, Michie,¹³ Collins, Attridge,¹⁴ and Edwards¹⁵ deal with the arrangement of the feeding miracle. These scholars commonly agree with the importance of the episode's unique arrangement. Therefore, it is necessary to find how the sandwich structure functions in the feeding miracle.

Scholars (France, Culpepper, Edwards, Stein, Guelich, and Witherington) commonly consider that Christology and discipleship are the overarching themes of Mark, and they deal with these two issues in their commentaries. Strauss says that Jesus is the model of true discipleship, and discipleship builds on what Christology is.¹⁶ Since the two issues are closely related, one research can be conducive to another research. However, the feeding miracle episode does not include any direct teaching about Jesus' identity or the discipleship, but it implies these themes in the character's dialogues and actions and the narrator's narration. Thus the exegete should consider these issues in the exegetical process. Jesus and the disciples are the main

¹² James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 194–195.

¹³ David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, Third Edition. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012), 51-52.

¹⁴ Adela Yarbro Collins and Harold W. Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary on the Gospel of Mark, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 295.

¹⁵ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, 11.

¹⁶ Mark L. Strauss, *Mark*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 42.

characters in this episode. The descriptions of actions and the dialogues between them might reflect who Jesus is and what discipleship is.

Summary of Chapter 2-5

The second chapter is about preliminary considerations. This foundational chapter includes three issues, the biblical usages of exegesis, the debate on the nature of exegesis, and the hermeneutical triad as the methodology of exegesis. First, it deals with what exegesis is before discussing the exegetical methodology, examining the biblical usages of ἐξηγήσομαι. The biblical usages will provide the purpose and essence of the exegesis. Second, it contains the debate of the nature of exegesis, whether it is art or science. It is important because it is related to the standard to accept or reject the new approach. When understanding the nature of exegesis, the cogency of research of the exegetical methodology also will be provided. Third, this chapter explains the hermeneutical triad, the foundational elements for exegesis, which are history, literature, and theology. These elements are the fundamental and overall frame to do exegetical work in this thesis.

The third chapter is about the introduction of the Gospel of Mark. The introduction for exegesis is framed by the hermeneutical triad. First, when it comes to the historical aspect, the authorship, audience, and date of writing of Mark are dealt with here through the external and internal evidence. The political situation that the readers at that time were under Roman oppression is the point that should be considered for exegesis. Second, in terms of literature, this research sees Mark as a narrative genre with a biographical focus. Thus, the four key elements, narrator, settings, plot, and characters, are suggested for narrative analysis. This narrative approach is based on historical validity. The story is a transmission way of historical facts. It

enables to strengthen the effectiveness of delivery. By understanding the story structure, it is possible to catch the intention of the author. Thirdly, this chapter includes the overarching themes that dominate the whole Mark, which are Christology and discipleship. These can function as the frame to interpret each episode.

The fourth chapter is the practice of exegesis, considering history, literature, and theology. The exegesis is implemented by the unit of a scene. The feeding miracle episode consists of the five scenes, 1) apostles' return, 2) move to rest, 3) encounter between Jesus and the crowd, 4) dialogue between Jesus and the disciples, and 5) feeding the crowd. Exegesis was done by trying to catch the diverse nuances fully through the adopted methodology, considering their consciousness, culture, political situation, geographical features, textual criticism, lexical usages, grammatical features, passage structure, figures of speech, writing styles, symbolism, biblical imageries, association with different biblical passages, immediate context, narrative feature transition (narrator's focus, conflict stage, settings, characteristics), parallels of the four Gospels, and Markan major themes. The final chapter is the brief conclusion of exegesis on Jesus' feeding miracle episode. It was summarized by the perspective of history, literature, and theology.

Chapter 2. Preliminary Considerations

Definition of Exegesis

Usages of ἐξηγέομαι in the New Testament

The term exegesis is derived from ἐξήγησις, which means “narration that provides a detailed description.”¹⁷ The verbal form ἐξηγέομαι is used five times in the New Testament.¹⁸

The usages in these passages might be helpful to understand what exegesis is.

John 1:18 says, “No one has seen God but Jesus explained (ἐξηγήσατο) God.” The verse denotes what Jesus did on the earth as revealing the hidden God to people. Even though He was God Himself, He also worked to disclose God and the word of God. In addition to John, the Lukan writings are significant sources to understand the term. In Luke 24:35, two disciples met Jesus on the way to Emmaus, and Jesus explained the Scripture to them. After that, the two disciples related (ἐξηγοῦντο) their experience to other disciples. διανοίγω (explain) was used in the previous scene that Jesus explained the Scripture to the two disciples, but ἐξηγέομαι was used when the two disciples explained their experience of Jesus. Acts 10:8 is about Cornelius’s vision. He saw an angel of God in a vision and received the message from him. Then, he explained (ἐξηγησάμενος) it to his servants and devout soldier. In Acts 15:14, James mentions Simeon has related (ἐξηγήσατο) that God’s salvation also includes the gentiles. Simeon says in Luke 2:32 that Jesus is a light of revelation to the gentiles. Here, the utterance of Simeon is described as ἐξηγέομαι, and it was about the prophecy of Isaiah (Is. 9:2; 42:6; 49:6; 51:4; 60:1-3). He interpreted the child Jesus as the fulfillment of the prophecy. Lastly, Acts 21:19 deals with

¹⁷ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 349.

¹⁸ John 1:18, Luke 24:35, Acts 10:8, Acts 15:14, Acts 21:19.

Paul's visiting James in Jerusalem. Then, Paul related (ἐξηγεῖτο) one by one the things which God had done among the gentiles through his ministry.

When considering all these usages of ἐξηγέομαι in the New Testament, they are employed to denote "explaining the things related to God." To be specific, the objects that were explained by the exegetes were God's existence, Jesus' teaching, the message from God's angel, the fulfillment of prophecy, and God's work. In this respect, the verb ἐξηγέομαι has a spiritual nuance that God-related things are narrated in detail, including the interpretation of exegetes. NT usages do not offer the specific process of exegesis but suggest the overall direction and purpose in order to reveal God.

Art or Science?

In the discussion of scholars on the definition of hermeneutics, some have seen it as the science that seeks a fixed rule or principle, while others defined it as the art that may embrace the individual's creativity, trying to connect with various academic fields. The church fathers and the Reformers considered hermeneutics as "rules" for the interpretation of the Bible,¹⁹ and Louis Berkhof says, "Hermeneutics is the "science" that teaches us the principles, laws, and methods of interpretation."²⁰ He emphasizes the unique and divine feature of the Bible, which is the inspiration of the Bible, and seeks the best ways to understand the meaning of the text. However,

¹⁹ Anthony C. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 2.

²⁰ Louis Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation: Sacred Hermeneutics*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1950), 11.

Schleiermacher²¹ and Gadamer²² think that hermeneutics is an “art” rather than a science. They commonly rejected a mechanical rule and fixed tradition in hermeneutics.

Darrel Bock, interestingly, suggests the third way that exegesis can be both of them. He argues that the exegetical process can contain a creative and instinctive approach, which is the most proper to each passage, and it is also the consistent method that can be applied to the text.²³ We may admit the creativity of exegete in that there have been diverse perspectives and methods in hermeneutics history. Even Luther and Calvin, two leading figures who rebelled against medieval allegorical interpretation, had different views on the specific theme. Luther thought that all passages’ interpretations should be linked to Christ, while Calvin emphasized the historical aspect in interpretation.²⁴ Both Luther’s Christ-centered interpretation and Calvin’s historical emphasis are understandable and acceptable despite the inclination difference. However, Bultmann’s demythologizing in the twenty century, which adopts historical skepticism,²⁵ is a different matter. Even though some scholars take the theory, this does not seem to be the sound hermeneutics in that it does not make us trust totally in the historicity of the Bible. In this respect, we need to remember that the indiscriminate acceptance of individual creativity in interpretation might lead to dangerous results in biblical exegesis.

²¹ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts*, ed. Heinz Kimmerle, trans. James Duke and J. Forstman (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977), p. 97.

²² Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Reflections on My Philosophical Journey,” in *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn (Chicago and La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1997), 3–63.

²³ Darrell L. Bock, “Opening Questions: Definition and Philosophy of Exegesis,” in *Interpreting the New Testament Text: Introduction to the Art and Science of Exegesis*, ed. Darrell L. Bock and Buist M. Fanning (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books: A Publishing Ministry of Good News Publishers, 2006), 23–24.

²⁴ Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation: Sacred Hermeneutics.*, 27.

²⁵ Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction*, 178.

In conclusion, it is reasonable that exegesis can be both art and science. It is difficult to reject the ambivalence of the exegetical process. However, we should seek the responsible and appropriate method in biblical interpretation, remembering that people have always made interpretative errors with their own theology.

Hermeneutical Triad

Even though exegesis is, to some extent, defined in the art aspect, there has been a common idea among scholars in the exegetical method. They commonly value the three elements, “history,” “literature,” and “theology,” in interpretation. Köstenberger calls them the “hermeneutical triad.”²⁶ Similarly, Berkhof suggests the “threefold interpretation of the Bible,” which is the grammatical-historical-theological interpretation.²⁷

First, the culture and customs in each era of the Bible are different from today. Thus it should be interpreted in light of their backgrounds. Studying the historical and cultural backgrounds presupposes that the Bible is rooted in actual history. Historical research is for better understanding the meaning of the text, not for examining its authenticity.²⁸ The historicity of the Bible is reliable, but our historical research is not intact. As to the resources for historical interpretation, there are two types of sources: the Bible itself and external resources.²⁹ In addition to the Bible, historical data accumulation is mainly done by archaeology, but this is not a perfect

²⁶ Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology*, 2nd Edition., Invitation to Theological Studies Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2021), 49.

²⁷ Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation: Sacred Hermeneutics*, 13.

²⁸ Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, Rev. and expanded, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 158.

²⁹ Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation: Sacred Hermeneutics*, 129–132.

tool that we may trust without a doubt. Osborne indicates a danger of hasty application when archaeology is used for apologetics.³⁰ For the exegetes, direct archaeological research is not their expert area. Thus, they should employ the results after enough examination.

The second element seems to account for the most considerable portion in exegesis. As to literature, above all, it is necessary to understand the unique nature of the Bible's authorship. Most importantly, the Bible is the word of God and inspired by the Holy Spirit, and thus it is inerrant. God is the ultimate author of the Bible. Next, human authors were used when God's word was written, and even their individuality was reflected in writing the Bible. Due to the ultimate author of the Bible, there is a consistent message in the whole book. However, it also has diverse literary aspects such as languages, genres, and individual styles from diverse human authors. God's word was written without errors, but it is necessary to approach the Bible's literature with carefulness. The biblical languages have their own complex rules, and high-quality literary devices are often employed in the text. Most of the arguments in interpretation might be about how to understand such literary expressions.

The last element of the hermeneutical triad is theology. It is the result of interpretive work. Throughout the Bible, there are consistent and repetitive messages. These have been systemized as the form of theology or doctrine. This theology, compressing the whole message, is again conducive to understanding the individual passage. Reformers argued "*Scriptura Scripturae interpres*" (Scripture is the interpreter of Scripture) as one of the fundamental interpretive principles.³¹ This is possible owing to the consistent flow in the Bible. Vanhoozer,

³⁰ Ibid., 159-160.

³¹ Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation: Sacred Hermeneutics*, 26.

however, warns against a new trend in theological interpretation. The new trend of hermeneutics, which started from Schleiermacher, cast doubt on the existing theological perspective. Schleiermacher usually equates “meaning” with “psychology.”³² He believed the biblical authors might have a kind of psychological illusion, and thus the reader should recover their consciousness to understand the text as well as or even better than its author.³³ Here, the recognition of the Holy Spirit’s inspiration, inerrancy, and the Scripture’s authority faded away. He replaced the supernatural character of inspiration with the spiritual illumination of Christians.³⁴ Human interpreters’ role gained more and more strength. As to this trend, Vanhoozer mentions the confession of Augustine, “*credo ut intelligam.*” (“I believe in order to understand”)³⁵ This means that human interpreters should be humble to God’s word before their interpretive work. Even though we stand as the interpreter of the Bible, we are not independent of God but dependent on God. When we rely on God with a humble attitude, God will open our eyes to see His glory in the text. In this respect, the sound theological view or faith in the Bible is important to interpret the Bible. It is necessary to examine the methodology and results of exegesis in light of the whole Bible.

³² Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge*, 25.

³³ Werner G. Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics: Development and Significance* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 44–50.

³⁴ Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation: Sacred Hermeneutics*, 32.

³⁵ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge*, 30.

Conclusion

When it comes to the definition of exegesis, we dealt with three essential parts, the biblical usages of ἐξηγήομαι, the debate on whether exegesis is art or science, and the hermeneutical triad as the common and essential elements of hermeneutics. When considering the usages of ἐξηγήομαι, it has a sense of spiritual delivery, which is related to the revelation of God. Also, as to the nature of exegesis, it is reasonable to admit exegesis is the rule that can be consistently applied to the text, embracing the limited exegetes' creativity with a thorough examination. Last, through the hermeneutical triad that is the commonality of exegesis, we might find the safe direction in interpretation.

In conclusion, exegesis is not a simple academic interpretation but spiritual work for God's revelatory purpose. Exegetes should have a sense of responsibility for this work since it demands discernment at every moment. Lastly, exegetes' past accumulated research, which came through trial and error, brings out the reliable interpretative commonality that is the hermeneutical triad.

Hermeneutical Triad as the Methodology of Exegesis

History

Blomberg suggests that historical analysis has a least two broad subdisciplines, which are historical-contextual analysis and social-scientific criticism.³⁶ The former is for the history behind the text, *diachronic* (throughout time), which deals with date, author, recipients, and

³⁶ Köstenberger provides three kinds of historical research in exegesis, chronology, historical-cultural background, and archaeology, while Osborne offers six specific areas of research, Geography, Politics, Economics, Military and war, cultural practices, religious customs.

historical elements related to the writing. However, the latter is for the history at the same time as the text, *synchronic* (within time), including implicit cultural values, social relationships, religious and political systems.³⁷

Historical-contextual analysis

As far as historical-contextual analysis in the New Testament is concerned, it can be implemented in two ways, inside the Bible and outside the Bible. First, the Bible can be the resource to explain the Bible. Sometimes, the biblical passages include information that explains the culture and customs of the era. Also, there are many parallels and complementary contents in the New Testament. When combining these pieces of information throughout the Bible, it is possible to make a clearer picture, understanding the full meaning of the individual passage.³⁸ From Genesis to Revelation, certain concepts in the Scripture had gradually developed within the temporal flow. Thus, it is sometimes necessary to search for the Old Testament information to understand particular themes in the New Testament. Conversely, specific themes in the Old Testament might be well understood in light of the New Testament's achievement.

In addition to the Bible, the diverse ancient sources outside the Bible are also useful to gain historical-cultural information in biblical interpretation. First, since the New Testament is deeply rooted in Judaism, Jewish resources might help understand the New Testament atmosphere. To be specific, Josephus and Philo's writings, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, the Rabbinic literature, and the Septuagint can provide historical

³⁷ Craig L. Blomberg and Jennifer Foutz Markley, *A Handbook of New Testament Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 67.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 68–72.

information.³⁹ Second, Greco-Roman materials are useful because the New Testament was written when the authors and readers were under the Roman political and literary influence. Roman historians, Suetonius and Tacitus, offer historical records such as biographies that reflect the political and social atmosphere of that time. Also, Epictetus, Seneca, and Plutarch were the moral leaders and writers at that time. Thus, their writings show the moral and literary atmosphere of the Greco-Roman world.⁴⁰

The interpreter's recognition of the information from the Bible and outside the Bible should be differentiated. While the information from the Bible does not give room for debate on whether it is true or not, based on the reliability of the Bible, the extra-biblical information does not guarantee the accuracy of the information. In this respect, the exegete should consider the Bible as the top priority when evaluating the reliability of the resources.

Social-scientific criticism

Social-scientific criticism and historical-contextual analysis overlap in many ways, but the former focuses more on ancient social and cultural systems. Thus, from a long-term perspective, this discipline's development may help overcome the interpreter's limited perspective in understanding the New Testament background. However, this study has emerged relatively recently, and the interpreters should carefully approach this due to its experimental nature.

Social-scientific criticism has three levels of methods, "social description," "sociological clarification," and "sociological analysis." First, the social description is the least speculative

³⁹ Ibid., 72–76.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 76–78.

among these categories and belongs to a subcategory of historical-contextual criticism, seeking the overall sociological and cultural values in the New Testament.⁴¹ The interpreter may examine them through the passages in the entire Bible.

Second, the sociological clarification is more speculative than the social description. To be specific, this practice seeks to explain certain phenomena by institutionalized terms based on similar phenomena in the Bible. For example, Jesus might be understood as the “early charismatic leader” as in the church of Acts.⁴²

Lastly, the sociological analysis is the most speculative one, which takes the theoretical models outside the Bible to explain biblical passages. For instance, some apply Marxism to the church in Acts. Thus, this approach is indeed plausible to invalid results.⁴³ Osborne suggests eight problems in the sociological approach, misuse of models, revisionism, tendency to generalize, the paucity of data, tendency to debunk the systems, reductionism, theoretical disarray, and determinism.⁴⁴ These are the critical parts that the exegetes should be careful with in doing historical research.

Barton seems to have a more positive perspective of social-scientific criticism than Blomberg and Osborne. Even though Barton admits that social-scientific criticism still has potential weaknesses, he thinks it has considerably impacted the interpretation of the New Testament recently. He explains the difference between historical-contextual analysis and social-scientific criticism by describing the difference between interpreting a motion picture and a

⁴¹ Ibid., 85-87.

⁴² Ibid., 88.

⁴³ Ibid., 86-90.

⁴⁴ Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 175-180.

single frame. Interpreting a motion picture focuses on the relation between cause and effect over time but interpreting a single frame seeks to find the relation between the subject and its environment at the moment of the shot.⁴⁵ Here, different kinds of questions are asked to characterize the New Testament world, such as “boundary questions, authority questions, status and role questions, ritual questions, literary questions with social implications, questions about group functions, and questions concerning the symbolic universe and the social construction of reality.”⁴⁶ These questions may enlarge the existing understanding of the New Testament world. Barton suggests the reasons why social-scientific criticism emerged and impacted the New Testament research recently. The reasons are very diverse.

The rise to prominence of the social sciences from the late nineteenth century on, and the impact of the sociology of knowledge in a wide range of academic disciplines; the influence on interpretation theory of the hermeneutics of suspicion represented by such intellectual giants as Nietzsche, Durkheim, Marx and Freud; the exhaustion of the historical-critical method as traditionally understood, and the failure of form criticism to fulfil its promise of identifying the *Sitze im Leben* of the New Testament texts; shifts in historiography generally away from the ‘great man’ view of history typical of Romanticism to one more attentive to history ‘from below’, with a much stronger popular and social dimension; the influence of the discovery of texts and archeological remains, as at Qumran, which provide important new comparative data for social history and sociological analysis; and the surfacing of different kinds of questions to put to the New Testament in the light of developments in twentieth-century theology, not least, the failure of liberal theology and the urgent concerns (often of a social and political kind) raised by liberation and feminist theologies.⁴⁷

It seems evident that social-scientific criticism is helpful for the development of hermeneutics. However, when considering some factors of the emergence of social-scientific criticism, a critical acceptance is necessary rather than accepting all as they are. If excluding the

⁴⁵ Stephen C. Barton, “Social-Scientific Criticism,” in *Handbook to Exegesis of the New Testament*, vol. 25, New Testament Tools and Studies (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1997), 277-278.

⁴⁶ Howard C. Kee, *Knowing the Truth: A Sociological Approach to New Testament Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 65-69.

⁴⁷ Barton, “Social-Scientific Criticism,” 278.

secular scholarship of its background, social-scientific criticism may lead biblical hermeneutics to a further level by adding the synchronic view to the existing diachronic view of historical-contextual analysis.

Literature

Textual criticism

Blomberg defines, “textual criticism is the practice of comparing the various copies of a work in order to determine, as best as possible, the exact wording of an original text that is either undiscovered or no longer exists”⁴⁸ When it comes to the practice of textual criticism, the updated Greek Bible and the apparatus are necessary. Reading the Greek Bible, it is necessary to find the most preferred reading among the textual variants in a particular passage, weighing the evidence. For this process, the exegete should understand the materials’ characteristics (Greek manuscripts, ancient translations, and patristic citations) and text types (Alexandrian, Western, and Byzantine). Blomberg suggests the guideline of weighing the evidence when encountering the variants. First, in the aspect of external evidence, the earliest, widely used, and accurately preserved ones should be considered first. Then, concerning internal evidence, more difficult and shorter ones are preferred. Last, they should be evaluated based on the author’s writing style, context, theology, and parallel passages.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Blomberg and Markley, *A Handbook of New Testament Exegesis*, 2.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

Literary context

For contextual understanding, Blomberg suggests the three levels of context. From within a narrow passage, and then a whole biblical book, lastly, to outside a biblical book.⁵⁰ In the first level, the exegete should understand the immediate context and a paragraph or a series of paragraphs where the passage is embedded. Sometimes, it might be necessary to perceive the relationship between the subsection and the central section. In the second level, it is possible to find the author's repetitive writing style or structure that is not usually used today. The familiarity with the author's style is conducive to the sharp perception of the message. Also, sometimes there is a kind of incongruity between different passages. It is an interpretive problem that the exegete should solve. Last, as to outside a biblical book, the same author's writings should be seen first, and then the different author's writings should be read. Based on the fact that the Holy Spirit is the chief author of all biblical books, the Bible has consistent unity in theology, even though diverse human authors write them. Thus, the validity of the conclusion in a biblical book might be confirmed in different biblical writings.

Lexical analysis

The determination of a word's meaning is an arduous job for various reasons, such as the difference between the host language and the receptor language, double nuances, historical change in lexical meaning, and the difference between the denotative sense and connotative sense, and the function in the context. Nevertheless, the exegete should determine the correct meaning of the word among in a range of meanings. There are three primary scholarly sources for lexical determination: the lexicon, theological dictionaries, and concordances. These

⁵⁰ Ibid., 94-102.

resources enable the exegete to understand the lexical meanings and the usages in the Bible and extra-biblical documents. For avoiding anachronistic fallacies and definition fallacies, Blomberg emphasizes synchronic usage more than diachronic usage and the context more than its lexical definition when opting for the meaning of a word. It is desirable to study the word after historical background study and literary context study because these contextual studies might help understand the meaning of the word more evidently.⁵¹

Grammar

Grammatical analysis requires the exegete to be equipped with relevant knowledge. Two semesters of grammar classes are not enough to do this work. Sufficient Greek syntax training is necessary before analyzing the Greek Bible because it has unique grammatical characteristics and systems, which include the possibilities of diverse translations. If not equipped with Greek grammar, anyone cannot understand the original nuances of the Bible. That being said, Mathewson discusses two approaches to grammar, the maximalist and the minimalist. The maximalist seeks to maximize the meanings based on grammatical possibility, while the minimalist aims to approach this in the conservative and careful perspective. Therefore, the maximalist style might cause excessive grammatical interpretative results and wrong decisions. Mathewson suggests exegetes be the minimalist for interpretation by streamlining the choices and categories of grammar, thereby focusing on the entire text.⁵²

⁵¹ Ibid., 117-142.

⁵² David L. Mathewson and Elodie Ballantine Emig, *Intermediate Greek Grammar: Syntax for Students of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2019), xvii- xviii.

Theology

Vanhoozer discusses the interpretive dimension of theology and the theological dimension of interpretation. He defined theology as the result of interpreting the Bible, while the act of interpretation is inherently theological.⁵³ Thus, there is a close interactive relationship between them. As to this relationship, Blomberg indicates two radical inclinations that occur when one disregards the other. When the theological frame dominates the biblical interpretation, it might cause a monotonous flow in interpretation, ignoring different authors' perspectives in the Bible. Conversely, if neglecting theological reflection in interpretation, the exegete will make a mistake of contradiction by overemphasizing diversity.⁵⁴

Besides the proper balance between the diversity of biblical writers' perspectives and the consistency of the synthetic doctrine, there is another issue to be cautious of for the proper interpretation. Vanhoozer deals with a more fundamental and hermeneutical change that affects our interpretation in his book. It is theology as a premise of biblical interpretation rather than theology as a result of biblical interpretation. He indicates three kinds of recent criticism that affect hermeneutics: hermeneutical non-realism, hermeneutical relativism, and reader-oriented hermeneutics.

First, as to hermeneutical non-realism, Vanhoozer mentions Friedrich Schleiermacher as the figure who casts doubt on the human author in the Bible. Schleiermacher thought that biblical authors have psychological confusion, and interpreters should eradicate it to read the original

⁵³ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge*, 29.

⁵⁴ Blomberg and Markley, *A Handbook of New Testament Exegesis*, 225.

meaning. This doubt causes weakening the conviction as to authors' authority and intention. Hermeneutical non-realists, such as Derrida and Fish, argue that interpretive activity precedes meaning in the text. However, hermeneutical realists focus on the antecedence of meaning in the text before the interpretative activity.⁵⁵

The next issue is hermeneutical relativism. According to Vanhoozer, hermeneutical relativism is the logical consequence of hermeneutical non-realism. The rejection of the author's authority leads to the absence of criteria to distinguish whether something is true or false. Finally, everyone can argue that they are correct, and hermeneutical relativism becomes more easily receptive than hermeneutical rationalism that the hermeneutical norm is existent.⁵⁶ When this is applied to the biblical interpretation, exegesis is not a consistent and conservative science, but it might be considered a fully creative art that depends on an individual's competence. Indeed, anyone cannot criticize the errors of interpretation.

Last, Vanhoozer describes reader-response criticism as the reader's liberation movement or the reader's revolt. The highlight was entirely moved to the reader's response from the author's intention. This trend focuses on the interaction between the text and the reader, and the readers finally complete the meaning of the text.⁵⁷ At last, the reader overwhelmed the author of the text and became the official king who determines the meaning of the text. In this stage, people might take it for granted that they read the Bible from their perspectives.

⁵⁵ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge*, 25.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

The interpretation of the Bible starts with humble obedience to the highest authority of God, who is the ultimate author of the Bible. When readers sincerely worship God, they can interpret the Bible and understand the true meaning of it through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, disregarding the chief author of the Bible means that readers want to be a king to determine the truth, and this finally results in a grotesque distortion of the truth.

Conclusion

So far, the hermeneutical triad: history, literature, and theology were dealt with as the details of exegesis. These elements are crucial principles that we should follow, but we also should be prudent when employing these rules due to the possibility of human errors. The methodologies that scholars suggest are not perfect; instead, it always contains limitations and restrictions.

In addition to the hermeneutical triad, there is another principle to note. The rule comes from the essential nature of the Scripture. 2 Timothy 3:16 says, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness” The inspiration of God is a unique feature that can only be found in the Bible. The Bible is not like the book that humans wrote. It has divine characteristics in the aspect of the origin and writing process. Even though there are many human authors of the Bible, the chief author is God himself. He directed human authors, and the Holy Spirit inspired all writings. Thus, God’s revelation could be perfectly preserved without any errors. Since the revelation is delivered in the form of literature of human authors and within the particular historical context, the exegete should study these elements. Nevertheless, it is not all; the exegete should be more spiritual in interpreting the Bible. It means that exegetical work is the process of knowing the heart of God, who is the chief author of the Bible. 1 Corinthians 2:10 says, “For to us God revealed them

through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.” We can interpret the Bible rightly when we humbly rely on the Holy Spirit because the Spirit knows God best. Thus the exegetes should be humble before the Holy Spirit who resides within us. This attitude is the fundamental principle to the way of exegesis. When the humble obedience to this authority disappears, the secular and human-centered thoughts infiltrate into the premise and process of biblical interpretation instead. Then, all valid and reasonable hermeneutics will degenerate. Conversely, if we worship the Lord when doing exegesis, all-wise methods and excellent balance will be given to the humble exegetes from God, who is the source of wisdom.

Chapter 3. Introduction of the Gospel of Mark

History

Authorship

The internal evidence of the authorship is not present in Mark. Thus, the authorship research might focus on the title in Greek manuscripts and the external evidence in the tradition. The superscript has two forms. One is a longer form, “the Gospel according to Mark,” εὐαγγέλιον κατὰ Μάρκον (A D L W Θ f¹³). Another is a shorter form, “according to Mark,” κατὰ Μάρκον (x B). It shows that the early church believed Markan authorship. Interestingly, the genitive of authorship is not used, but the combination of κατὰ and the accusative is used in the title. It is the common feature of all Gospels.⁵⁸ In addition, traditionally, εὐαγγέλιον, is usually in the singular form because all Gospels are from the same source, Jesus the Christ, but written by different authors in four versions.⁵⁹ Presumably, κατὰ + accusative, the unique pattern in the titles of Gospels might reflect this same idea.

Justin Martyr (A.D. 150) quoted Mark 3:17, identifying the quotation: “It is written in the memoirs of Him (Peter).”⁶⁰ In A.D. 160-180, Irenaeus mentions Mark as the author of the Gospel, giving several descriptions concerning him. It says that Mark, who was the interpreter of Peter, wrote the Gospel after Peter’s departure (death) in Rome, and it was what had been

⁵⁸ Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 3.

⁵⁹ M. Hengel, *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ*, trans. J. Bowden (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000), 34–115.

⁶⁰ Justin Martyr, “Dialogue of Justin with Trypho, a Jew,” 252.

preached by Peter.⁶¹ Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 180) mentions that the crowd who heard Peter's preachings requested Mark to record them.⁶² Origen (A.D. 200) says that Mark composed the second Gospel according to the instructions of Peter.⁶³ Tertullian (A.D. 200) denotes the possibility of Markan authorship.⁶⁴ Eusebius (A.D. 324) describes Mark as the evangelist in Egypt and Alexandria. He proclaimed the Gospel that he wrote.⁶⁵ In addition, Eusebius gives a more detailed description of Markan authorship, citing Papias's comment. Jerome (A.D. 400) also repeats the same thing as Papias's.

This also the presbyter said: Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, though not indeed in order, whatsoever he remembered of the things said or done by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but afterward, as I said, he followed Peter, who adapted his teaching to the needs of his hearers, but with no intention of giving a connected account of the Lord's discourses, so that Mark committed no error while he thus wrote some things as he remembered them. For he was careful of one thing, not to omit any of the things which he had heard, and not to state any of them falsely.⁶⁶

In conclusion, even though there is no direct mention of the second Gospel's authorship as the internal evidence, it is possible to assume that Mark was the author of this Gospel through the superscript and various records in tradition. Some scholars might question Mark, the interpreter of Peter, as the author. However, it seems reasonable to conclude Mark as the second Gospel author based on abundant resources in tradition.

⁶¹ Irenaeus of Lyons, "Irenæus against Heresies," 414.

⁶² Eusebius of Caesaria, "The Church History of Eusebius," 261.

⁶³ Ibid., 273.

⁶⁴ Tertullian, "The Five Books against Marcion," 350.

⁶⁵ Eusebius of Caesaria, "The Church History of Eusebius," 116.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 172–173.

Audience

Like other Gospels, Mark does not offer any evident mention of the audience; thus, it should be inferred from clues in the text. Mark implies that the audience might understand the titles, traditions, characters, and places in Jesus' ministry because the relevant explanations are absent. If the author considered unbelievers who do not know anything about Christianity, he must have explained more to make them understand.⁶⁷ Furthermore, "Simon of Cyrene," the father of Alexander and Rufus in 15:21, gives a crucial hint that the audience might know him and his children. Rufus, the son of Simon, is mentioned in Roman 16:13. If he were the identical man, Simon's family would be the Roman Church members, and thus the name might have been specifically mentioned.

They must have gained Christian backgrounds, but they do not seem to understand Aramaic words. Several passages in Mark, 3:17–22; 5:41; 7:11, 34; 9:43; 10:46; 14:36; 15:22, 34, add Greek translations about Aramaic expressions. Besides, it is easy to find the frequent usages of Latinism in Mark.

- 2:23, "to make their way" (ὁδὸν ποιεῖν, *hodon poiein*; Lat. *iter facere*)
- 2:4, 9, 11, 12; 6:55, "mat" (κράβαττος; Lat. *grabatus*)
- 4:21, "basket" (μόδιος; Lat. *modius*)
- 5:9, 15, "legion" (λεγιών; Lat. *legio*)
- 6:27, "soldier of the guard" (σπεκουλάτωρ; Lat. *speculator*)
- 6:37; 12:15; 14:5, "denarius" (δηνάριον; Lat. *denarius*)
- 7:3, "fist" (πυγμή; Lat. *pugnus*)
- 7:4, "pitcher" (ξέστης; Lat. *sextarius*)
- 12:14, "tax" (κῆνσος; Lat. *census*)
- 12:42, "penny" (κοδράντης; Lat. *quadrans*)
- 15:39, 44, 45, "centurion" (κεντυρίων; Lat. *centurio*)
- 15:15, "scourge" (φραγελλόω; Lat. *flagello*)
- 15:16, "praetorium" (πραιτώριον; Lat. *praetorium*)⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Stein, *Mark*, 9.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 11–12.

The fact that the audience's identity was not clarified in Mark might mean the author did not intend to mention it. Nevertheless, the linguistic expressions seem to give subtle information that enables us to imagine who they are. Based on the above, the Christian audiences were familiar with the Roman culture and spoke Greek but did not know Aramaic. More specifically, it is possible to argue the readers might reside in the city of Rome. Many scholars agree with the fact that the readers might be the residents of Rome. The early church also considered Rome as the destination of Mark, except Chrysostom, who argued Egypt.⁶⁹ If Rufus mentioned in Romans is the same man as the one mentioned in Mark, the assumption will become more persuasive.

Date

Strauss summarized three kinds of opinions about the time when Mark was written, 1) the mid-50s to early 60s, 2) mid-60s, 3) late 60s to early 70s.⁷⁰ The early date is related to the time during the ministry of Peter in Rome, and Christians in Rome already had to experience the temporary expulsion from Rome when Claudius (A.D. 41-54) was in office in A.D. 49.⁷¹ The middle one is related to the persecution of Nero (A.D. 64), and the last one is related to the destruction of Jerusalem. (A.D. 70) The early date is supported by Clement of Alexandria, who argued Mark wrote his Gospel while Peter stayed in Rome.⁷² However, his argument is conflicted with Irenaeus's comment that Mark wrote it after the departure (death) of Peter and

⁶⁹ James A. Brooks, *Mark*, vol. 23, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 27.

⁷⁰ Strauss, *Mark*, 37-38.

⁷¹ Derek Brown, "Suetonius," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

⁷² Eusebius of Caesaria, "The Church History of Eusebius," 116.

Paul owing to Nero's persecution. If Irenaeus is correct, the second or the third view will be proper. The recent scholarships seem to be divided mainly into before the fall of Jerusalem (the late A.D. 60s) and after the fall of Jerusalem (early 70s).⁷³ A.D. 64 was the year that Nero persecuted Christians in Rome, and the Roman military went against Palestine in A.D. 67. Finally, Jerusalem was seized in A.D. 70. When considering the three plausible dates of writing Mark, the degree of persecution and threatening the safety of Christians from the Roman government becomes more serious as time goes. Three dates commonly show that Mark was written in the background of oppression and persecution of Rome, even though the levels of persecutions are different.

Literature

Genre

Strauss indicates two wrong approaches to define the genre of Mark. One is to see it as a kind of genre that had been in the ancient world. Another is to view the Gospel as a new genre that broke with precedent. The first view is supported by form critics who think that the Gospels are not intentional literary works but only the compilation of traditions. However, modern scholars refute this in that the authors of the Gospels have their own literary styles and theologies. The second perspective also seems unsuitable in that the Gospels' literary features cannot be categorized in a specific genre.⁷⁴ The books, which are called the Gospels, have

⁷³ Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, vol. 34A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), xxxi.

⁷⁴ Mark L. Strauss, *Mark*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 26.

diverse literary characteristics in themselves. Even though the four Gospels in the Bible have identical features in the historical, biographical, and narrative characteristics aspects, another book called the Gospel, *the Gospel of Thomas*, is the simple collection of Jesus' sayings. In this respect, it is not easy to define the Gospels as one literary category.⁷⁵

The ideal approach to the genre of the Gospels might be the combination of two different opinions. The Gospels have a unique identity distinct from other genres, but they were also affected by the literary trends in those days. Strauss emphasizes the feature of the Gospels as the written version of what had been orally proclaimed, and lots of literary elements are employed during this process. Many scholars have consensus that the Gospels have an element of biography genre that preserves the memory, exploits, and teachings of famous people.⁷⁶ More recently, the four Gospels have been treated with weight in the aspect of the narrative.⁷⁷ To sum up, the balanced view to understanding the genre of the Gospels is to admit that the unique feature of them and simultaneously to understand the literary environments of that time. In this respect, the Gospels might be defined as the written proclamation of Jesus based on the oral proclamation, including the diverse ancient literary features.

Mark as Story

Mark's Gospel as a story does not mean that it is fiction. Instead, it is related to finding the most proper methodology to understand the literary feature of Mark. Mark is the written

⁷⁵ Collins and Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary on the Gospel of Mark*, 15.

⁷⁶ Strauss, *Mark*, 27.

⁷⁷ Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, xxii-xxv.

version of the “oral proclamation” of the Gospel with a biographical focus on Jesus. Therefore, seeing Mark as storytelling might be effective in understanding the Gospel.

Narrative criticism, which started from secular scholarship, is related to reader-response criticism. Biblical scholars do not entirely accept their perspectives,⁷⁸ even though they employ them to a limited extent. Seymour Chatman, one of the most significant figures of American narratology, suggested the narrative-communication model applied to fiction and film through his book in 1978. In this model, the real author is not identified with the implied author, who the reader reconstructs from the narrative, and it is not the same as the narrator in the narrative.⁷⁹ However, the Bible is not such a literary work, but the word of God based on the actual history that contains the perfect consistency between the divine author and human authors. The ultimate author divinely used the human authors as the tool for the intact transmission. What human authors mean is not different from the intention of the ultimate author, and the narrator in the episode is the same as the human author. Except for this, narrative criticism is quite beneficial to understand the stories in the Bible. The evangelists proclaimed the message in the form of a story that contains the real life of Jesus. The audience who heard the story could easily deliver it again in the same format due to its easy and interesting literary features. Storytelling was significantly utilized for evangelism. In this respect, it is worth studying the format of the Gospel narrative.

⁷⁸ Mark Allan Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?*, ed. Dan O. Via Jr., Guides to Biblical Scholarship (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), 19.

⁷⁹ Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1978), 147-151.

To apprehend Mark as a story, the frame of interpretation includes four elements: narrator, settings, plot, and character.⁸⁰

Narrator

A narrator means the storyteller of the narrative, who is embedded in the narrative itself.⁸¹ The narrator in Mark can be explained in four aspects, role, perspective, style and tempo, and repetition. First, when it comes to the narrator's role, the narrator in Mark is third-person, who is outside the narrative, not a character in the story. Thus readers can be immersed in the story itself, not being conscious of the narrator's presence. The non-character narrator functions as an omniscient commentary, adding explanations, translations, and even secret knowledge. It reveals the inner thoughts of the characters, and God's voice, and mysterious experience. This guidance enables readers to understand the identity of Jesus and discern whether what characters are trustworthy or not in a story's conflict situation.⁸² Second, it is necessary to focus on the viewpoint of the narrator. Mark, the narrator, does not see the events and characters in the story with neutral aspects but has his own value system and judgment criteria. The terminologies in the narrative reflect these viewpoints consistently. Mark suggests two contrasting categories of terms and guides the readers toward the good criteria that God favors.⁸³ Third, Markan narrator presents a brief and straightforward style. Thus it gives an urgent tone throughout the overall

⁸⁰ Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie in *Mark as Story* suggest the five key elements for narrative analysis, but the last one, rhetoric, is excluded because it requires to assume the "ideal audience." This is very hypothetical and presumptive and might be conflicted with the historical facts.

⁸¹ Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 39.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 39-43.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 44-45.

story. However, concerning the narrator's tempo, narration varies according to the situation. In particular, as going forward to the end of the story, the tempo slows down to focus on Jesus' passion and crucifixion.⁸⁴ Last, the narrator's repetition in Mark contains eight kinds of patterns as below.

1. **Verbal threads:** The simple repetition of specific keywords and phrases may occur within episodes and adjacent episodes.
2. **Foreshadowing and retrospection:** The anticipation of later events and recollection of earlier events. They are both ends of one thread.
3. **Two-step progressions:** Two successive and similar comments; they come together to complete one meaning.
4. **Type-scenes:** Repeated types of episodes that can be categorized.
5. **Sandwich episodes:** One story is inserted between two parts of another story.
6. **Framing episodes:** Two similar episodes in both ends make a more extensive story frame.
7. **Episodes in a concentric pattern:** The early part and latter part are symmetrical.
8. **Progressive episodes in a series of three:** Three episodes occur successively or at intervals.⁸⁵

Settings

Settings are the temporal, spatial, cultural, and political conditions that events occur. They give a hint to understand the theme in the narrative. Mark's settings can be considered in three significant aspects, the cosmic setting, the political-cultural setting, and the journey. First, the cosmic setting includes the "creation-fall-redemption" frame. The Gospel of Mark is the announcement of restoration in the fallen world. The ministry of Jesus shows the spiritual and physical recovery in the world.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Ibid., 46-47.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 48-54.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 64-65.

Second, the political and cultural settings should be considered. In the political respect, Israelites were living under Roman authorities like Herod Antipas, the king in Galilee, and Pilate, the Roman procurator on the Judea and Jerusalem. In the religious aspect, people were controlled by Jewish leaders such as the high priests, the elders, and the scribes. The political rulers were not just, and religious leaders were spiritually blinded. Presumably, the life of ordinary people was not stable due to the absence of exemplary leadership. The social descriptions in Mark also offer information on how the people lived. The names of people were followed by their origins, like locations or parents. These seem to be important concepts to categorize diverse identities of people. Jesus was denigrated because he was from Nazareth, while He was praised as the Son of David.⁸⁷

Lastly, there are crucial locations on Jesus' journey as the geographical settings. The Jordan River is the starting point of Jesus' ministry. In the Old Testament, it was the entrance to the promised land. Galilee is the primary place where Jesus spent most of His time during the ministry, and Jesus met His disciples after the resurrection here. Jesus' journey also includes the gentile territory, where Jesus did the same ministry for the gentiles. Jerusalem is a meaningful place because Jewish leaders captured and crucified Jesus there. As for Jesus, it was the final destination of His ministry. In addition to these locations, the desert, the mountain, and the sea are also the narrative settings. These overlap the meaningful places, such as Mount Sinai, the Red Sea, and the wilderness that Israelites spent 40 years. Also, there are scene changes between the private settings (a house, upper room, boat, mountain, on the way) and the public settings (villages, synagogues, houses, deserted spaces between villages, by the sea, Jerusalem, and the

⁸⁷ Ibid., 66.

temple). In particular, the private settings strengthen the secret motif and the intimacy between Jesus and the disciples.⁸⁸

Plots

The plot is the overall design and flow of a story, and it consists of various conflicts. The conflicts are important events because they give tension and suspense to the story. In Mark, the conflicts between Jesus and others account for a significant portion of narrative tension. There are three kinds of conflicts in Mark. The first conflict occurs between Jesus and cosmic forces. The cosmic forces, the evil spiritual beings, diseases, and nature, are described as the existences to torment people. Jesus liberated people from the hostile cosmic forces. The first conflict in Mark is the spiritual conflict between Jesus and Satan. After overcoming the spiritual attack on Him, Jesus goes to those who are physically and spiritually oppressed. He was voluntarily involved in diverse conflicts, casting out demons and healing many sick people. In addition, Jesus overwhelmed the power of nature. Jesus stilled the sea and walked on it. Even He conquered the hunger of people by giving feeding miracles.⁸⁹

The second conflict in Mark is between Jesus and the authorities. Jewish leaders could not admit the authority of Jesus due to some reasons. They considered that Jesus was the lawbreaker who did not follow the tradition and the Law, and argued that His spiritual power to cast out demons came from the demons' ruler, and tried to trap Him in a statement. Finally, they conspired to kill Him and successfully did it. Conversely, when seeing Jesus' response to the authorities, Jesus did not withdraw His ministry despite the opposition of religious leaders.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 66-72.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 82-84.

However, He avoided the culmination of conflicts through wise answers until God's time and frequently employed parables.⁹⁰ The existence of certain evil Jews was not always a stumbling block to Jesus' ministry because the readers could learn how to react in the same situations. In addition, God finally used the wicked to hand Jesus over to crucifixion, which was the most critical mission of Jesus.

Lastly, there was also conflict between Jesus and the disciples. From the viewpoint of the disciples, the understanding and the attitude toward Jesus changed as time went on. In the beginning, the disciple could give up their possessions and family to follow Jesus, even though they could not perfectly understand who Jesus is and what He will do. Thus Jesus revealed His identity to them and also taught the disciples about faithful discipleship. The disciples initially expected glory and power as the reward for following Christ, but Jesus told them the exact opposite. Even though they were confused, they kept following Jesus to Jerusalem. However, in the final scene, Mark does not describe the disciples' courageous commitment at the point of crisis as they were in the early scene but says that they turn out to be cowards and betrayers. From the perspective of Jesus, what He wanted them to be was to realize Jesus' true identity and the disciples' true identity. Jesus repeatedly showed His authority to overwhelm the order of nature and repeatedly prophesied His upcoming suffering and death so that the disciples could broaden their limited understanding. He also taught them that discipleship was not related to the secular power but related to denying himself, bearing his cross, and following Jesus.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Ibid., 88-89.

⁹¹ Ibid., 90-96.

These three significant conflicts play a crucial role in developing the plot of Mark. The combination of plural conflicts adds more potent suspense to the story and reveals Mark's clear message. Even though there are various conflicts in the story, the plot is consistent, and it flows toward one final goal.

Characters

Characters can be directly described through narration, and the conflicts in the plot may reflect who they are and what they do. There are four groups in characters, Jesus who is the protagonist, the authorities, the disciples, and the crowd.⁹² The four groups of characters show the differences in light of the quality of the authority, the level of faith, and the object they seek. When it comes to authority, Jesus has the divine authority given by God the father. Twice God's voice proved Jesus' incomparable authority. Based on the authority, Jesus preached the Gospel, healing the sick and casting out the demons. Jesus did not dominate over people but served them through this authority. The disciples also served people, healing the diseases and driving demons away through the authority given by Jesus. Thus, their authority is similar to Jesus' in the aspect of quality and usage, and it is subordinate to Jesus' authority. However, the authority of Judean leaders is not divine but secular. Their authority is humane and institutional. It is more like Roman rulers. They did not rely on God but on the tradition and religious system that may secure their positions. In terms of faith, even though Jesus Himself is the Son of God, He humbly prayed to God the father regularly, especially at crucial points. The disciples show inconsistency in their faith. Even though they started to follow Jesus, giving up their family and possessions, they often failed to understand the word of Jesus, showing a lack of faith. Compared to the

⁹² Ibid., 99.

disciples, the authorities were far worse. They could not arrive even at the minimum of faith. Indeed, they were spiritually blinded. The disciples betrayed Jesus in the final point, while the authorities intentionally planned to kill Him. As to the goal, Jesus wanted to give His life for people. However, the disciples sought the glory of the kingdom, which was the misunderstanding. Moreover, the authorities tried to keep their corrupted religious position that was far from God's will.⁹³

The last group, the crowd, is different from the other three groups in the authority aspect. They are not leaders but those whom leaders lead. Jesus said that they were like sheep without a shepherd. It means that there were no actual leaders who could care for them despite the presence of many leaders. The crowd's faith is difficult to define because there might be diverse people in them, but Mark provides that people do not think He is the Messiah, but He is John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the prophets. The crowd followed Jesus because they needed Him and were amazed at Him.⁹⁴

Major Themes

Christology

The unique point of Markan theology is the self-concealment of the Messiah. This issue became a crucial theological debate issue in the Gospel of Mark since William Wrede. His argument about the Messianic secret is that Jesus became the Messiah with the resurrection (it means that He was not the Messiah before the resurrection), and the disciples also finally

⁹³ Ibid., 104-129.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 130-136.

understood the Messiahship when He rose from death.⁹⁵ Even though it is difficult to admit his opinion totally, it is evident that his interest in Jesus' self-concealment triggered scholars' more debate on this intriguing issue from that time.

According to Stein, the secrecy of the Messiahship has two critical functions in legal and literary aspects. First, the self-disclosure remarks justify Him to defend against the charges of political incitement. When Jesus was brought to the high priest, they could not find any evidence to put Him to death until He Himself revealed that He was Christ, the son of the blessed one in that place. Thus, the fact that Jesus tried to keep secrecy during His ministry gives a vital reason to prove His innocence of political revolution. He had never used His divine authority and power for the sake of political purposes. Second, concerning literary function, the self-concealment plays a role of paradoxically revealing the greatness of Jesus. Even though Jesus tried to stop people from talking about Jesus and His works, they could not help revealing the miracles of Jesus to everyone. This shows Jesus' greatness that cannot be suppressed.⁹⁶

In addition to Stein's reasonable explanation, there are two critical passages to provide the reasons for secrecy. First, Mark 4:11 says that the disciples are allowed to listen to the mystery of the kingdom, but those who are outside are not allowed. It was the reason why Jesus used parables. The parable has the functions of both concealment and revelation. Jesus' ministry was selective, not for all. There are two different responses as to the incomprehensible parables of Jesus. Some people did not try to ask Jesus, but a few tried to do so, and thus they could listen

⁹⁵ William Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*, (Greenwood, S.C: The Attic Press, 1971), 236.

⁹⁶ Stein, *Mark*, 25.

to Jesus' explanation. Jesus's parables function as the touchstone to distinguish who follows Jesus until the end or not.

Second, Mark 9:9 says that Jesus commanded the disciples not to disclose His transfiguration before His death and resurrection. People are generally overwhelmed by the miracles and mysterious phenomena. Thus, this prevents people from focusing on more important things. Jesus' demand for secrecy is like the veil of Moses. He hid a less important thing for a more important thing. Jesus wanted them to understand Himself in light of the sacred sacrifice. It might not be helpful in understanding the true identity of Jesus when people spread that Jesus performed miracles. Rather, the mysterious experience might backfire and be a stumbling block to understanding Jesus when they know His powerless last moment. In Mark, as it comes close to the time when Jesus is crucified, the concealment remarks fade away. Moreover, the centurion's confession immediately after Jesus' death, "Truly, this man was the Son of God," seems to break all the erstwhile concealment and secrecy finally. At the moment of suffering and death of Jesus, His identity was most clearly revealed without any concealment.

Discipleship

The discipleship in Mark is based on Christology.⁹⁷ As far as concerned with Jesus' identity, the crowd thinks that Jesus is John the Baptist or one of the prophets. However, Peter says that Jesus is the Christ. Based on this confession, Jesus explains to disciples what discipleship is. The essence of discipleship is self-denial and cross-bearing. For a clear understanding of the discipleship that Jesus teaches, it is crucial to grasp the passion of Jesus. The crucifixion of Jesus is closely related to discipleship's essence, denying himself and bearing

⁹⁷ Strauss, *Mark*, 42.

the cross. If the disciples cannot understand the suffering of Jesus, they cannot also carry out the true discipleship that Jesus teaches. Peter could confess that Jesus is the Christ, but he also rebuked Jesus when He stated about the upcoming suffering. Peter could not yet understand why Jesus should suffer for people despite his true confession that Jesus is Christ.

One of the events that only Mark provides is healing the blind man in Bethsaida. It is situated just before Peter's confession and Jesus' teaching of discipleship. This healing miracle is interesting because Jesus did not heal him at once, but He did it in two stages. Thus, the blind man experienced the transition state before the stage of being healed totally. The state is the middle point between perfect blindness and perfect recovery. He could see people but thought the trees were walking around. This scene seems to deliver the message related to the next scene concerning Peter and Jesus.⁹⁸ Even though Peter saw Jesus as Christ, but he could not admit the suffering of Jesus. The healing account of the blind man might imply Peter's immature spiritual state, and it can also be interpreted that Peter might soon break away from the partial blindness of his spirit through the healing of Jesus. In this respect, Markan discipleship's unique feature is the fact that it describes the transition stage of spiritual growth.

⁹⁸ R. Alan Culpepper, *Mark*, ed. Leslie Andres and R. Alan Culpepper, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Incorporated, 2007), 265.

Chapter 4. Exegesis

The Immediate Context of Mark 6:30-44

Mark 6 includes the sandwich episodes; one story is inserted in the middle of another story.⁹⁹ There is a story of John the Baptist's death between the beginning and the end of Jesus' ministry. Sending His disciples is a part of the ministry. Mark 6:7-13 is the beginning part of the story and deals with the departure of the disciples. Jesus gives them the power to cast out demons and instructions on how to do ministry before sending them. The middle part of the sandwich, Mark 6:14-29, is about John the Baptist's death. Herod heard of the name of Jesus and thought of Him as the risen John the Baptist. The utterance of Herod makes the continuity between John the Baptist and Jesus. After the narration of Herod's recognition, the narrator states how Herod killed John the Baptist. It seems essential to understand the inserted episode's function, which might help understand the feeding miracle. In the narrative aspect, this radical transition might give suspense to hearers.¹⁰⁰ In the literary aspect, the intercalation can draw the reader's attention, providing the effect that it has been a long time between the departure and the return.¹⁰¹ Also, it might function to imply another theological message. Edwards thinks that the death of John the Baptist and the mission of the disciples might overlap and denote the cost of the discipleship.¹⁰² It is worth considering because the Synoptics commonly deal with John the

⁹⁹ Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 51.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Collins and Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary on the Gospel of Mark*, 295.

¹⁰² Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, 183.

Baptist's death before feeding the five thousand. In this respect, how to view the sandwich structure of Mark 6 is related to understanding the text of Mark 6.

Episode Outline of Mark 6:30-44

The plot contains a series of episodes, even though they are loosely linked with each other. Generally, each episode (or event) in the whole plot may be connected by *Kaì*, even though diverse conjunctive particles may be used within the episode.¹⁰³ More specifically, the episode as the literary unit might be divided into the smaller unit, the "scene." The individual scene can be distinguished by the difference of the narrative elements such as settings, character, the focal point of the narrator, and the conflict stage. The feeding miracle of Jesus is one of the six episodes in Mark 6. Again, the episode can be divided into five scenes like below.

- Scene #1. Apostles' return and Jesus' suggestion for the break (6:30-31)
- Scene #2. Move to rest (6:32)
- Scene #3. The encounter between Jesus and the crowd (6:33-34)
- Scene #4. The dialogue between Jesus and the disciples (6:35-38)
- Scene #5. Jesus fed the crowd. (6:39-44)

Episode Matrix of Mark 6:30-44

Given the miracle that Jesus fed the five thousand is defined as an episode, it is possible to find rhythmical changes of scenes that include the shift of narrative elements. This transition

¹⁰³ Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 75.

gives suspense and relief to the readers and is conducive to a dramatic plot. The five scenes in the episode show the regular transition like below.

Scene	Setting	Character	Narrator's focus	Conflict
#1	Private	Jesus, disciples, and the implied crowd	Disciples' report and fatigue	Development
#2	Private	Jesus and disciples	Transfer via a boat to an isolated place	Resolution
#3	Public	Jesus, the crowd, and the implied disciples	The crowd and Jesus' compassion	Development & Resolution
#4	Private	Jesus, disciples, and the implied crowd	The disagreement between Jesus and the disciples	Development
#5	Public	All people	The narration of the feeding miracle	Resolution

When seeing the matrix of Mark 6:30-44, there is a kind of rhythm in the transition of narrative elements. From scene #1 to scene #5, the setting changes alternately between public and private settings. Scene #1 and #4 are difficult to define clearly. The scenes focus on the conversation between Jesus and the disciples, but the presence of the crowd is implied. When it comes to the characters, Jesus and the disciples are the main characters in the episode. Especially, it is worth paying attention to the dialogue between them in private settings. The appearances of the crowd at the proper times play a crucial role in shaping the dramatic flow. The implied crowd in scene #1 is the reason why Jesus and the disciples should move. The explicitly revealed crowd in scene #3 is the reason why Jesus had strong compassion and did His ministry in an isolated place. Also, in terms of the conflict, it shows the consistent repetition of development and resolution. The conflict is the power to develop the story. The three conflicts, disciples' fatigue (#1), crowd's wretchedness (#3), and hunger (#4), are the point to make the

next actions. The narrator's focus fluctuates amid the overall narration, the dialogue, actions, and inner thought, zooming in or zooming out. The descriptions offer visual imagination to the readers. In conclusion, the four kinds of narrative elements' transition in the episode show a regular pattern like a musical rhythm, providing abundant imageries and suspense to the readers.

Exegesis: Mark 6:30-44

Scene #1. Apostles' Return and Jesus' Suggestion for the Break (v. 30-31)

- **Setting: Private**
- **Character: Jesus, disciples, and the implied crowd**
- **Narrator's focus: Apostles' report and the fatigue**
- **Conflict: Development (The disciples were hungry and could not have a rest owing to the crowd)**

The apostles returned to Jesus and reported to Him. (v. 30)

The consistently used term, disciples, is not used, but apostles, *οἱ ἀπόστολοι*, is employed here. It is mentioned once in Mark. Even though a few manuscripts of Mark 3:14 include it, it is a variant reading which is not preferred.¹⁰⁴ This only mention might be meaningful because the author suggests the meaning of the apostle in the context. When considering *ἀποστέλλειν* in Mark 6:7, *οἱ ἀπόστολοι* might be simply rendered as “those who were sent.” Reploh does not see it as a technical term as the status denoting the “Apostles,” but he argues that it is about the normal role of disciples in the ministry context.¹⁰⁵ This can also be supported by the usage of

¹⁰⁴ Barbara Aland et al., eds., *The Greek New Testament: Apparatus*, Fifth Revised Edition. (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; American Bible Society; United Bible Societies, 2014), 127.

¹⁰⁵ Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, 338.

Hebrews 3:1. The author of Hebrews employs the apostle to mean Jesus, the one who was sent by God. This usage is simply based on the lexical meaning of the word, not a technical term.

However, when the readers of Mark read it (at least, the mid-50s), they could already recognize the official concept of apostleship since they saw Peter's ministry.¹⁰⁶ According to Rengstorf, ἀπόστολος has the primary concept of "being sent," and the secondary sense that includes the "authorization" in the Greek usage.¹⁰⁷ Since the ministry of disciples was authorized by Jesus, they reported the result of their mission to Jesus. Luke, another Gospel that has the term the apostles right before the feeding miracle, also writes that the apostles gave an account to Him. These give an impression that the activities of apostles are more formally under the control of Jesus.

For Paul the Apostle, who lived with Mark and Peter in contemporary times, verifying the apostleship was a crucial issue as he enthusiastically defended it in his epistles, and it was related to the authority of his teaching. When his apostleship is proved, his teaching can be reliable. The fact that Paul had to defend his apostleship means some readers understood the concept of apostleship and considered it crucially.

In the Old Testament, Jewish background, "being sent" (שלח) by God means that he is the agent of God and his word is God's word. When Moses was sent by God, he proclaimed God's word and accomplished God's saving work. As Moses should explain himself as the one

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, "Ἀποστέλλω (πέμπω), Ἐξαποστέλλω, Απόστολος, Ψευδαπόστολος, Ἀποστολή," ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 408.

sent by God for His purpose, the apostles should do so. Thus the apostleship as the technical term might have been gradually recognized by people.

Presumably, Mark might try to suggest the definition of the apostleship in the nearby context of Mark 6:30, which is linked with the commission (6:7-13), suffering (6:14-29), and miracle (6:30-44). Indeed, these three factors are closely related to the essence of apostles' ministry. 2 Corinthians 11:13 and Revelation 2:2 mention the appearance of "false apostles." They might become the reason why the concept of apostleship should be more evident. When considering such situations of the early church, the definition from the proper context seems necessary for the readers. Conclusively, οἱ ἀπόστολοι might be plainly used as the lexical meaning in this episode. That being said, it is more plausible to mean the special term with the nuance of authorization from Jesus when considering the historical background, biblical context, Greek usage, and Hebrew usage.

The third-person narrator radically changes the scene from John the Baptist to the twelve apostles. This swift transition and a brief description of the apostles' return seem to make an overlapped image that combines John the Baptist's tragic destiny with the present ministry. The Synoptics commonly write John the Baptist and the feeding miracle in succession. Provided that the Synoptics were written when the martyrdom of the apostles began, this arrangement could be an intentional literary device to imply something related to two consecutive stories.

Also, it can be narratively interpreted from the perspective of "type-scene."¹⁰⁸ This verse can describe the official emergence of the apostles, who are the authorized representatives of Jesus' saving ministry. When seeing the birth of Moses and Jesus, the rulers at that time

¹⁰⁸ Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 51.

commonly committed cruel infanticide for the stability of their power. They were born and grew in a mournful atmosphere, and the reality filled with grief and suffering seems to show the reason why they must be born in the era and what the mission they will have. When children's tragic death distressed many parents' hearts, the two special babies, who will play critical roles for their people, were saved by God's special protection. Likewise, the rise of the apostles in Mark 6 presents such a "type-scene" that combined the images of tragedy and protection through consecutive John's death and the apostles' successful ministry.

In light of the discipleship, the overlapped image of the death of John and the apostle's ministry contains a meaningful sign. John the Baptist did uncompromisingly seek to say the truth and justice. As a result, he had to be put into prison and killed by Herod. It shows the relationship between seeking the truth and being persecuted. It seems to present that being a disciple means not only wonderful empowerment but also includes the sacrifice of discipleship. Unless there is a close connection between John the Baptist's death and the disciples' successful ministry, it may partially give only the splendid image of discipleship without the sacrifice of the cross.

Jesus told the disciples to rest awhile in an isolated place. (v. 31)

The latter part of the verse suggests the development of the conflict. The disciples healed the sick, cast out demons, and proclaimed the Gospel during the ministry. They might become tired and hungry due to the ministry, but they did not have a proper opportunity to rest and eat due to many people coming and going around them. Even though the narrator says the existence of the crowd around them, what they did to the disciples is not explicitly mentioned. The disciples were filled with a sense of achievement due to the successful ministry, but they needed to be spiritually and physically refreshed, distancing themselves from the crowd.

Among the four Gospels' feeding miracles, Mark is the only Gospel that shows Jesus' concerns with disciples' fatigue. This verse is worth considering in that Jesus's character is shown compassionately to His disciples. Even though Jesus shows compassion on other minor characters, He rarely shows the same emotion to the twelve disciples. Instead, Mark tends to deal with the scenes that Jesus rebukes them due to the lack of faith. Thus, the readers might imagine that Jesus always seems angry with His disciples and seems not to satisfy them, and always expects the ideal state. However, the readers may think of a new aspect of Jesus when He cherishes the disciples, giving them the time to rest in this scene.

Jesus gently suggests to the disciples that they move to an isolated place to rest. Δεῦτε, translated as "come," is not an imperative verb, but usually used as a hortatory particle (adverb) in the Gospels.¹⁰⁹ The mood of Jesus' utterance is not strong but soft to the readers. The Greek word, ἔρημος in ἔρημον τόπον does not always mean the "desert" or "wilderness" as the noun. Ἐρημος also has meanings as the adjective such as "isolated," "desolate," "deserted," and "empty."¹¹⁰ When considering the description of "green grass" in verse 39, this place might be translated into not a desert but a quiet place isolated from villages.¹¹¹ In the aspect of the narrator's repetition, the "two-step progression"¹¹² is found in κατ' ἰδίαν εἰς ἔρημον τόπον. LEB translates this into "(You yourselves come) privately to an isolated place." This expression includes two "isolations." The first is the "isolation with Jesus," and the second is the "isolated

¹⁰⁹ Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 220.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 391.

¹¹¹ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2002), 263.

¹¹² Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 49-50.

place.”¹¹³ Based on the lexical usage, it is not simply physical-distancing but might include a sense of spiritual walking with Jesus. It could be “verbal threads” with Mark 1:35, which says that Jesus went away to an “isolated place” (εἰς ἔρημον τόπον) and was praying there.¹¹⁴ Jesus prayed regularly before and after the ministry. In this respect, this short break might have the spiritual intention for the disciples. In light of discipleship, isolation with Jesus is not trivial because being with Jesus is the first requirement of disciples. (Mark 3:14)¹¹⁵

“There were many people coming and going” (οἱ ἐρχόμενοι καὶ οἱ ὑπάγοντες πολλοί) is the “type-scene.” This expression recalls Mark 1:45 that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city but stayed out in isolated places (ἐρήμοις τόποις), and they were coming (ἤρχοντο) to Him from everywhere. In Mark 1:45, a healed man spread the word, and many people who heard of it came to Jesus. Likewise, in this verse, the fact that many people were around the disciples might indicate that their ministry was successful.¹¹⁶ The follow-up action is also the same as in Mark 1:45. Jesus always wanted to withdraw from many people to an isolated place. Even after the feeding miracle, Jesus left the crowd and the disciples so that He could pray in the mountain. (Mark 6:46-47)

The verbal thread, the simple repetition of keywords or phrases, is also one of the narrator’s repetitions in this episode.¹¹⁷ The disciples did not *have a chance* (εὐκαίρουν) to eat

¹¹³ Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 27, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 405.

¹¹⁴ Collins and Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary on the Gospel of Mark*, 318.

¹¹⁵ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, 190.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 48.

owing to the rush. Εὐκαιρέω means “to experience a favorable time or occasion for some activity,”¹¹⁸ and its adjectival form is εὐκαιρος (εὖ: good + καιρός: time). In the previous episode, the opportune day (ἡμέρας εὐκαιρου) to kill John the Baptist came. There is a stark contrast between the contexts of the two episodes in the usage of the same word.¹¹⁹ In the Herod episode, there was Herod’s birthday party, but it became the opportune time to kill John the Baptist. In the feeding miracle, the disciples’ busyness led to the lack of the opportune time to eat, but it finally led the story into the miraculous time for feeding the crowd.

Scene #2. Move to Rest (v. 32)

- **Setting: Private**
- **Character: Jesus and disciples**
- **Narrator’s focus: Transfer via a boat to an isolated place**
- **Conflict: Resolution (They could have a rest in a boat, escaping from the crowd)**

Jesus sailed with the disciples to an isolated place. (v. 32)

Jesus and the disciples privately moved to a quiet site to rest and eat. This scene enters into the resolution stage of the conflict that has been developed in the previous scene, despite the lack of description of the conversation between them. The narrator does not clarify the specific name of the place where they are going to, but it repeated: “privately to an isolated place” (εἰς ἔρημον τόπον κατ’ ἰδίαν) that was already mentioned in the preceding verse. This simple description seems to change the scene’s mood from busyness and tiredness to a calm and peaceful atmosphere.

¹¹⁸ Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 406.

¹¹⁹ Collins and Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary on the Gospel of Mark*, 318.

The four Gospels are different in stating the destination and transportation. Mark 6:32 and Matthew 14:13 commonly indicate that they moved to an isolated place by using a boat. However, Luke 9:10 explicitly says that they moved to a “city called Bethsaida,” and John 6:1 also states the “other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias).” Instead, the latter two Gospels do not mention what tool they used for transfer. When it comes to the destination, France points out the discord between Mark 6:45 and Luke 9:10. The former indicates Bethsaida as the place that the disciples leave for after the feeding miracle, while the latter mentions it as the feeding miracle venue. Even though France admits the possibility of two Bethsaidas with the same name, he agrees more with the position that Luke’s description has low accuracy.¹²⁰ It is necessary to observe the relevant passages in order to resolve this confusion.

- Luke 9:10, εἰς πόλιν καλουμένην Βηθσαϊδά
- John 6:1, πέραν τῆς θαλάσσης τῆς Γαλιλαίας τῆς Τιβεριάδος
- Mark 6:45, προάγειν εἰς τὸ πέραν πρὸς Βηθσαϊδάν

Luke 9:10 and John 6:1 are about the feeding miracle venue, while Mark 6:45 indicates where the disciples move to after the feeding miracle. Based on the conviction that all descriptions are correct, it is possible to find the agreement of three passages. The Bethsaida in Luke 9:10 is the right place that Jesus’ miracle occurs because it does not use πέραν. The different mention of John 6:1 is the description from the perspective of the Galilean territory or the city Tiberias. Πέραν has meanings, a “position across from something,” and “on the other side.”¹²¹ There is a lake between Bethsaida and Galilee that includes Tiberias. Thus πέραν in John 6:1 has the center

¹²⁰ France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 264.

¹²¹ Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 796.

point of the lake when pointing out the opposite side. However, Mark 6:45 seems to be a different description. τὸ πέραν πρὸς Βηθσαϊδάν might point to the “other side” or “different area” of Bethsaida. The center point might be implied somewhere in the Bethsaida when indicating the other side. In other words, Jesus might intend that the disciples sail somewhere around Bethsaida (the miracle venue), which is not far from there. It is reasonable since Jesus had to join in them after prayer in the mountain. Making the disciples get into a boat might not be simply for transfer, but the physical distancing from the crowd as He originally wanted a quiet place and some rest in Mark 6:31.

For the disciples, the boat as a means of living before meeting Jesus became a means of ministry after meeting Jesus. In particular, Jesus often used it as a way of distancing from the crowd as well as a transportation tool. Jesus and the disciples used a boat when they wanted to leave the crowd (3:9; 4:36; 5:18; 6:32, 45; 8:10), and they met the crowd again when they got out of the boat (5:2, 21; 6:54). Physical distancing is necessary for spiritual refreshment. The disciples could enjoy the communication with Jesus in a boat without any disturbance. Stein observes an interesting chiasmic structure in verses 31-32.

A κατ' ἰδίαν (6:31)

B εἰς ἔρημον τόπον (6:31)

B εἰς ἔρημον τόπον (6:32)

A κατ' ἰδίαν (6:32) ¹²²

A means “alone,” and B is “to a lonely place.” This structure includes the social distancing from the crowd and the physical distancing from the field of ministry. Jesus did not want the disciples

¹²² Stein, *Mark*, 312.

to do incessant work but take enough rest spiritually by being together with Jesus in a boat and physically through isolation from the crowd. It appears to be the principle of ministry since Jesus also did so after the feeding miracle. (Mark 6:45-46) For Jesus, being distanced from people and praying to God were the best way of rest. Likewise, being distanced from people and being with Jesus were the best way of rest for the disciples.

Scene #3. The Encounter Between Jesus and the Crowd (v. 33-34)

- **Setting: Public**
- **Character: Jesus, the crowd, and the implied disciples**
- **Narrator's focus: The crowd and Jesus' compassion on them**
- **Conflict: Development and Resolution (Jesus had compassion on the crowd because they were like sheep without a shepherd, but He tried to solve the conflict by beginning to teach them many things.)**

The crowd recognized Jesus and the disciples, and they arrived before them. (v. 33)

The narrator's focus was on Jesus and the disciples in previous scenes, but now it is on the crowd who explicitly appears in this scene. The public setting begins again with the encounter between Jesus and the crowd. People who were near the sea saw them going and recognized them as Jesus and the disciples. Some scholars say that the attempt to avoid the crowds seems to have failed.¹²³ However, when considering the time that Jesus has been with the disciples in a boat without disturbance, it might be plausible to interpret that the original intention of Jesus was achieved in a boat. If it is true, the genuinely isolated place is the boat.

¹²³ Strauss, *Mark*, 273.

The disciples might have the spiritual renewal and the physical rest there. In this verse, the private setting ends, and the public setting begins again.

The narrator uses a hyperbolic expression, “They ran on foot from all the towns.” It seems to reflect the number of people, the five thousand men.¹²⁴ Presumably, people near the seaside might see them first, and then the news might be spread quickly in the surrounding villages. Geographical data shows that there are numerous coves along the seaside.¹²⁵ Thus it might not be difficult for people to recognize them and run to the anchorage ahead of them. As to the wording of the latter part of verse 33, there are three different manuscript readings, προῆλθον αὐτούς (got there ahead of them), συνῆλθον πρὸς αὐτόν (gathered at it), προῆλθον αὐτούς καὶ συνῆλθον πρὸς αὐτόν¹²⁶ (got ahead of them and gathered at it). People’s quick response must be accurate because the major reading is the first one, and the third one also includes the early arrival. The description that people ran and arrived in advance shows how they were eagerly expecting Jesus. John 6:2 gives the reason why they so desired to see Jesus, “They saw the signs which Jesus was performing on those who were sick.” The crowd needed the divine power of Jesus since they could not help heal themselves. Therefore, they hurried to Jesus, the only healer. Jesus had compassion on the crowd. (v. 34)

The narrator’s focal point changed from the crowd to Jesus’ action and inner emotion. The omniscient narrator describes a deep feeling in Jesus’ heart only here within this episode. Indeed, this in-depth emotional description might be the crucial ground for interpreting the rest

¹²⁴ Stein, *Mark*, 312.

¹²⁵ Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, 340.

¹²⁶ Aland et al., eds., *The Greek New Testament: Apparatus*, 141.

of the episode, and it is conducive to understanding the viewpoint of Jesus as to human beings. Jesus saw them as sheep without a shepherd. This affection is the source of Jesus' all ministry, but there is no mention of such emotion in disciples' ministry.

Interestingly, there is a conflict paradigm in this short verse. That being said, Jesus does not conflict with the crowd but the non-human forces, physical and spiritual sufferings, which are intrinsic in human beings.¹²⁷ Jesus' insight into the crowd's underlying misery was the development of the conflict, and He immediately responded with the motive to resolve the problem, teaching many things. Thus the readers may feel both the suspense and relief in this brief verse.

“Sheep without a shepherd” is the typical metaphor used in the Old Testament and Apocrypha,¹²⁸ and it is only mentioned here among the four Gospels concerning feeding the five thousand. Thus the shepherd in the Old Testament might be a lens to interpret Markan writing on the feeding miracle. When seeing the usages of this painting-like expression, what the shepherd means contains the leader or king in the military context, the spiritual leader who guides the Israelites, and the protector responsible for people's safety. Sometimes, the shepherd means the Messiah (Zech 13:7), and David calls Yahweh his shepherd (Ps 23:1). According to the code of Hammurabi, Mesopotamian kings were considered as shepherds of their people.¹²⁹ The army without the military leader must be defeated, and Israel without the God-sent leader must spiritually wander, children without the protector must be in danger, and people without the king

¹²⁷ Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 82.

¹²⁸ Num 27:17; 1 Kgs 22:17//2 Chr 18:16; Jer 10:21; Ezek 34:5; 37:24; Nah 3:18; Zech 13:7; Jdt 11:19.

¹²⁹ Marcus, *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 406.

must be scattered. When Jesus saw the crowd, He felt that they were so much vulnerable like sheep without a shepherd.

This figure of speech can be more abundantly interpreted in light of the biblical context. The immediate context, John the Baptist's death, sheds light on this metaphor. He was the reliable spiritual leader for the Israel people at that time, and thus his death might have been considered as the loss of a good shepherd. Besides, the first usage of "sheep without a shepherd" is mentioned in Moses' plea to God in Numbers 27:17. He felt concerned about the absence of the faithful leader who would be instead of him. When God listened to him, Joshua was appointed as the faithful successor of Moses. Likewise, Jesus was concerned about the lack of leadership, but the disciples might be the excellent successors instead of Him in the upcoming future. As God nominated Joshua after Moses, the spiritual succession seems to run from John the Baptist to Jesus and from Jesus to disciples.

Among the four Gospels, Matthew and Mark's narrators only reveal the inner motive of Jesus via the omniscient commentary.¹³⁰ Bultmann argues that Jesus' compassion is related to the hunger of the crowd.¹³¹ However, if Jesus simply saw the physical hunger of the crowd, He must have started feeding ministry right after the encounter, not teaching them. The fact that Jesus taught them when feeling compassionate implies that the suffering of human beings is essentially a spiritual matter. Indeed, the broken relationship with God is the fundamental reason for all visible suffering that humans experience. *Σπλαγχνίζομαι* (have compassion) has the noun

¹³⁰ Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 40.

¹³¹ Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, Revised edition (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 217.

form of σπλάγγων, which denotes entrails such as the heart and the kidneys. It was considered the locus of affection since the abdomen trembles when a human feels strong emotions.¹³²

Σπλαγγνίζομαι is used only in the Synoptics, and all usages except in the parables are related to Jesus' miracles.¹³³ When Jesus healed people, raised the dead, cast out demons, and performed the feeding miracle, He consistently had the compassionate motive on those in the sufferings. With holy compassion, Jesus served people. Matthew mentions that Jesus healed their sickness, but Mark says that He began to teach them many things. Luke contains both of them, while John does not tell anything but only focuses on the feeding miracle. Instead, John 6:22-71 includes the long discourse of Jesus the next day after the feeding miracle.

Scene #4. The Dialogue Between Jesus and the Disciples (v. 35-38)

- **Setting: Private**
- **Character: Jesus, disciples, and the implied crowd**
- **Narrator's focus: The disagreement between Jesus and the disciples**
- **Conflict: Development (The disciples wanted Jesus to dismiss the crowd, but Jesus wanted the disciples to feed them.)**

The disciples: They suggest Jesus disbanding the crowd. (v. 35-36)

Markan writing style, the repetition, occurs at the beginning and the end of verse 35.

“And it was already a late hour,” (καὶ ἤδη ὥρα πολλῆς) ... “and it was already a late hour.” (καὶ ἤδη ὥρα πολλή) The Greek expression, ὥρα πολλή is interesting, when compared to the

¹³² Moisés Silva, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 351–352.

¹³³ Mt 9:36, 14:14, 15:32, 18:27, 29:34; Mk 1:41, 6:34, 8:2, 9:22; Lk 7:13, 10:33, 15:20.

descriptions in other Gospels.¹³⁴ It is literally “much (many) hour” or “great hour,” but it exactly means the “late hour” in the afternoon in this context.¹³⁵ The combination of the two words is interesting. Lexically, ὥρα has three categories of meaning, “an undefined period of time,” “a period of time as a division of a day,” and “a point of time as an occasion for an event.”¹³⁶ Scholars generally consider that the first one is proper in this context, but it might be able to contain a more abundant symbolic image if assuming that it belongs to the third category, “a point of time as an occasion for an event,” since it is combined with πολλή (great, much). The combination of these words exactly fits in the miracle of feeding the five thousand in the aspect of the miraculous and plentiful image that they arouse. The narration of the time seems to have a kind of signal to indicate what is going to happen soon. The Synoptics commonly describe the temporal transition toward the evening time, while John does not mention the hour but uniquely mentions that the Passover, the feast of Jews, was near. Mark’s ὥρα πολλή and John’s Passover appear to be different, but they might have the same literary purpose, which is adding the symbolic image to the current situation. The Passover has lavish implications such as Israel, Moses, exodus, miracles, salvation, the upcoming Jesus’ last supper, and crucifixion. The introduction of the Passover in John might be implicitly conducive to understanding the feeding miracle’s meaning.

After the temporal designation, the narrator focuses on the action of the disciples. They came to Jesus, who was doing the ministry among the crowd. This scene is the only one in this

¹³⁴ Matthew 14:15, ὁψίας δὲ γενομένης (Now when it was evening), Luke 9:12, Ἡ δὲ ἡμέρα ἤρξατο κλίνειν (Now the day began to wear away).

¹³⁵ France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 265.

¹³⁶ Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 1102.

episode where the disciples try to take the ministry's initiative instead of Jesus,¹³⁷ while Jesus takes the initiative in the miracle of feeding the four thousand in Mark 8:1-2.¹³⁸ When seeing the interaction between Jesus and the disciples in Mark, Jesus mostly led the crucial part of ministry by calling them, teaching them, and sending them. However, the disciples initiatively talk to Jesus in three cases. The first case is when they could not understand the situation or teaching of Jesus. (Mk 4:10, 9:28, 10:10, 11:21) The second case is when the disciples humbly ask what Jesus wants. (Mk 14:12) In these two cases, Jesus' answers and explanations follow them. However, the last case is rather different from the preceding ones in that the disciples' words were very contrary to the intention of Jesus. In Mark 4:38, the disciples blamed Jesus because He was ignorant that they were perishing. Mark 9:5 says that Peter suggested making three tents for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. Mark 9:38 includes John's report that he prevented an evangelist because he did not follow them. Mark 10:35-37 is about the request of Zebedee's sons for the side seats of Jesus. The case of Mark 6:35 corresponds to the last case. The disciples were not pliable to Jesus enduring all the ministry progress, but they committed obviously hasty and impetuous actions.

The narrator's triple repetition of keywords is shown in this episode.

ἔρημον τόπον (v. 31)

ἔρημον τόπον (v. 32)

Ἐρημός ἐστιν ὁ τόπος (v. 35)

¹³⁷ Collins and Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary on the Gospel of Mark*, 324.

¹³⁸ Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 341.

Provided that ὥρα πολλή is the description of a temporal setting, ἔρημός ἐστιν ὁ τόπος is the portrayal of a spatial setting. The verbal threads, three-time repetition of the place give an impression of emphasis. The wilderness was the place that Israelites experienced the manna when they came out of Egypt. The repeated description of the place arouses the expectation of the divine miracle for those familiar with the history of Israel. The wilderness is the special setting designed for the miracle because there is nothing to rely on in the wilderness so that people only see God. In verse 35, the combination of the narrator's temporal description and the disciples' mention of the wilderness seems to function as the literary device to imply the upcoming miracle.

The disciples initiatively asked Jesus to send the crowd to the surrounding villages so that they could buy something to eat. Superficially, they seem to be concerned about the welfare of the crowd.¹³⁹ Internally, however, it is attributed to the disciples' rational attitude, the lack of trust in Jesus, and the arrogance that they can control His mistake. It will be more clearly shown in the conversations to come. Even though they performed the successful healing ministry and cast out the demons through the power that Jesus gave, they could not expect how Jesus would overcome the hunger of the crowd.¹⁴⁰ Interestingly, the disciples had faith in healing and exorcism, but they did not have good faith in the nature miracles like stilling the sea (4:35-41), the feeding miracles (6:30-44, 8:1-10), and walking on water. (6:45-52) Their faith was partial as the partial eyesight of the blind man in Bethsaida. (8:22-26)

¹³⁹ Culpepper, *Mark*, 208.

¹⁴⁰ Collins and Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary on the Gospel of Mark*, 324.

Jesus: He wants the disciples to feed the crowd. (v. 37)

The conflict occurred between Jesus and the disciples. Jesus rejected the disciples' proposal to dismiss the crowd. Instead, He suggested a different solution to them. Δότε αὐτοῖς ὑμεῖς φαγεῖν. Δότε is the imperative form, and ὑμεῖς (you) is the emphatic expression.¹⁴¹ Jesus commanded the disciples themselves to give the crowd something to eat. This Jesus' suggestion can be interpreted in two aspects.

First, it presents Jesus' warning of irresponsibility and unbelief of the disciples. The irresponsibility means that they did not try to be responsible for the food provision. The unbelief means that they did not consider the power of Jesus. The disciples' sense of responsibility and their belief in Jesus appear to differ in nature, but in fact, they are closely related to each other. If they try to serve people to the end, they might realize that they could not do it alone with their ability, and thus they will finally try to rely on the power of Jesus. The disciples did not have such faith in the feeding miracle of Jesus since they did not consider being responsible for the hungry crowd to the last moment.

On top of that, Jesus's request implies a kind of prophecy that the disciples will participate in the feeding ministry for the crowd. Indeed, the disciples gave the food to the crowd a little later, as Jesus said. This scene echoes the command that Jesus gave Peter, Βόσκει τὰ ἀρνία (πρόβατά) μου, "Feed my sheep" in John 21:15, 17. When the disciples were sent to the crowd as the apostles in the previous mission, they found and met people, moving among them. Now, however, the people themselves came and gathered around Jesus, and they were like a flock of sheep with their shepherd. While they were the evangelists who proclaimed the Gospel in the

¹⁴¹ Strauss, *Mark*, 275.

first mission, they are now with Jesus as the shepherds, who take care of the sheep in the wilderness. The crucial difference between the disciples' mission and Jesus' feeding ministry is the motive. Whereas the disciples' conviction in the spiritual power from Jesus drives their healing ministry, Jesus' feeding miracle was driven by compassion on the crowd. It is the heart of the shepherd. In addition to the divine power, the disciples needed to learn the compassionate heart. When Jesus says that the disciples should give them something to eat, it also includes the announcement of their calling as the shepherd in the future as well as the assistants of the feeding miracle.

The disciples: They think that they cannot feed the crowd. (v. 37)

As to the suggestion of Jesus, the disciples answered, "Shall we go and spend two hundred denarii on bread and give them something to eat?" Seemingly, the disciples ask permission from Jesus, but they are actually revealing the strong resistance to the word of Jesus. They could never imagine giving them something to eat. The calculation of the disciples collides with Jesus' thought. This point is the climax of the conflict flow.

Among the four Gospels, Mark and John only give the estimate for feeding the crowd, and John provides more detailed information through the conversation between Jesus and Philip. According to John, two hundred denarii was the minimum amount to feed the crowd. Bruce Malina and Richard Rohrbaugh say that two denarii were worth providing a bread ration of twenty-four days for a poor traveler at that time.¹⁴² Approximately, if two denarii can purchase 72 servings, two hundred denarii can afford 7200 servings. Even though it was a rough estimate, Philip must have apprehended the rough number of people there before Jesus' miracle began.

¹⁴² Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 219.

However, this rational attitude of the disciples was not helpful for the ministry. Rather, it came close to being the stumbling block to the miracle, revealing the lack of faith. The disciples' tendency to calculate the figure is also shown when a woman in Bethany poured an alabaster vial of very costly perfume on Jesus' body.¹⁴³ They could promptly estimate the perfume's monetary value, but they could not see the true motive of love that the woman had within her heart. Likewise, even though the disciples completed the mission that revealed the divine power, they could not follow the inner heart of Jesus and could not believe Jesus' power to solve their hunger.

Jesus: He commands the disciples to find how many loaves they have. (v.38)

When it comes to the monetary figure of the disciples, Jesus said to them to go and find how many loaves they have. The interesting point is a stark contrast of perspective between Jesus and the disciples. The disciples focused on how much they needed to feed, but Jesus focused on how much they already had. This part is not written in other Gospels, but it is meaningful in that it is related to some feeding miracles in the Old Testament. There are three ages that the feeding miracles occur in the Old Testament. The first one is the manna in the wilderness in the age of Moses. And then there were Elijah's and Elisha's feeding miracles. The difference between manna and two other prophets' feeding miracles is whether they have something to eat or not. The manna was brought from heaven to the wilderness, but other feeding miracles were based on little food that humans originally had. Jesus' miracle was to multiply and maximize the existing things, not create something new like the manna in the wilderness. This feature of the feeding miracle fits well in the feature of Jesus' overall ministry in that He restored people who were

¹⁴³ Those who mention two hundred denarii are different in three Gospels. "Some people" in Mark 13:4-5, "The disciples" in Matthew 26:8-9, "Judas Iscariot" in John 12:4-5.

sick and demon-possessed. The miracle that Jesus performed for people was not to create but restore the fallen state due to sin.

The disciples: They obeyed Jesus and found the five loaves and two fish. (v. 38)

The disciples obeyed the word of Jesus and found out how many loaves there were among them. It is the part that is written in only Mark. John 6:8-9 adds more specific information that Andrew found a lad who had five barley loaves and two fish. The loaves as one of the staples might be round, flat, and large enough for one person's ration.¹⁴⁴ Also, fish was one of the favorite diets for Galileans and Judeans at that time. They could eat them as fresh, salted, pickled, and dried. Ordinary people usually ate salted or dried ones.¹⁴⁵

The disciples could not understand the word of Jesus that they should give them something to eat, but they could follow Jesus' saying that they should go and find the food among them. Through this obedience, the initiative that the disciples tried to exercise was moved to Jesus. Since the disciples handed it over to Jesus, they could see the feeding miracle that they could not imagine, not the ordinary and comprehensible provision. The intervention and obedience of the disciples led to the abandonment of the rest. The unique viewpoint of Mark is to observe the motive of the rest at the beginning of the episode. The narrator described it as if Jesus and the disciples moved to the isolated place to rest but did not mention the rest of the disciples in the destination. It is only possible to imagine that they might have a short break until they came up with the dinner, besides the time with Jesus in the boat. Taking a rest is not the

¹⁴⁴ France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 266.

¹⁴⁵ Michael Ivanovitch Rostovtzeff, *The Social & Economic History of the Hellenistic World*, Vols. 1-3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 2:1177.

purpose itself but the temporary course for the next ministry. As the normal routine of Jesus' ministry, Jesus and the disciples kept focusing on the crowd after they disembarked on the land.

The symbolic value of the number in the feeding miracle is the interpretive issue. Yoo sees the two different feeding miracles in the aspect of numerical symbolism. In the five bread in feeding the five thousand, "five" might symbolize the five books of the Pentateuch and the five books of the Psalm. The numerical symbol might indicate Israel. The beneficiaries of feeding the five thousand were the people of Israel. On the other hand, the seven bread and the seven large baskets were mentioned in the miracle of feeding the four thousand in Mark 8:1-10. Yoo says that the number "seven" means the entire world of the gentiles as well as the perfect number in the Bible. The number of the tribes in the Canaanite was seven (Deut 7:1; Josh 3:10, 24:11), and the seventy nations were established through the three sons of Noah (Gen 10), and there were the seven years of the famine in Egypt that represents the world. (Gen 41:26) In addition, the number "four" indicates the four directions on the earth. (Isa 11:12; Jer 49:36; Dan 7:2-3; Zec 1:8-11; 6:5, Rev 7:1) ¹⁴⁶ When considering the miracle of feeding the four thousand that occurred in the gentile territory, the implication of the number "seven" goes well with the miracle. In this respect, the numbers in the two different feeding miracles might have symbolism related to the beneficiaries of the miracle.

Scene #5. Jesus Feeds the Crowd. (v. 39-44)

- **Setting: Public**
- **Character: Jesus, disciples, and the crowd**

¹⁴⁶ Sang Sub Yoo, "Four Gospels' Perspective on Jesus' Feeding Five Thousands," *Korea Evangelical New Testament Studies* 6, no.1. (2007): 1-49.

- **Narrator’s focus: The overall narration of the feeding miracle**
- **Conflict: Resolution (Jesus resolved the conflict from the hunger of the crowd and the doubt of the disciples through the feeding miracle.)**

Jesus’ commandment to let the crowd recline. (v. 39)

The Greek text says, καὶ ἐπέταξεν αὐτοῖς ἀνακλῖναι πάντας συμπόσια συμπόσια ἐπὶ τῷ χλωροῦ χορτῷ. There is an interpretive issue in αὐτοῖς. αὐτοῖς might indicate the “disciples” or the “crowd.” When considering the diverse English versions, both of them might be admitted. NIV, NRSV, CSB, NLT, and NKJV opt for αὐτοῖς as the “disciples,” while NASB, ESV, and LEB adopt αὐτοῖς as the “crowd.” The four Gospels also respectively have different descriptions. Luke 9:14 says, “He said to the disciples, let them recline,” which denotes that Jesus says to the disciples to make the crowd sit. In John 6:10, Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” It also means the indirect commandment of Jesus. Jesus let the people sit down through the disciples. On the other hand, Matthew 14:9 says, “commanding the crowd to recline,” which shows the direct commandment of Jesus. The first interpretive option (disciples) more denotes the assistance of the disciples in the process, but the second option (the crowd) more reveals the initiative commandment of Jesus. In the Markan contextual aspect, the first option is preferable. In Mark, Jesus commanded the disciples that they should give them something to eat, and Mark only includes the process that they went out to find how many loaves they had.

The reclining posture is usually related to the Greco-Roman style of dining,¹⁴⁷ but it also might be associated with the typology of the Passover.¹⁴⁸ The ἀνακλίνω has two meanings, “to

¹⁴⁷ France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 267.

¹⁴⁸ Marcus, *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 27, 407.

cause someone to lie down,” and “to cause to recline at a meal.”¹⁴⁹ The first meaning arouses the shepherd image, and it is well linked to the “green grass.” The second meaning recalls the “banquet image.” It is the more appropriate option for translation in this meal context, even though both are implied in this scene. When considering the banquet image of the verb, its combination with συμπόσια συμπόσια is proper in that συμπόσια has the meaning of eating together, and it adds the distributive sense when repeated.¹⁵⁰

Strauss indicates the possibility of the allusion of the “messianic banquet” that is mentioned in Isaiah 25:6-8, which symbolizes God’s ultimate salvation.¹⁵¹ Isaiah 25:6, “The Lord will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples,” is followed by the promise of the eschatological comfort that the Lord will swallow up the covering, veil, and death, wiping tears and removing the reproach. John Calvin explains that this banquet is related to the coming of Christ.¹⁵² The preunderstanding of the Isaian messianic banquet could give the readers a more abundant imagination. The banquet with Jesus might be interpreted as the fulfillment of the Isaian prophecy. Also, when considering the immediate context, it may recall the banquet of Herod Antipas,¹⁵³ even though the two banquets might be totally different in their atmosphere and the conclusion. Herod’s party includes the high-ranking people, the dance of Herodias’ daughter, and John the Baptist’s death, whereas Jesus’ banquet includes the hungry crowd, the

¹⁴⁹ Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 65.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 959.

¹⁵¹ Strauss, *Mark*, 276.

¹⁵² Calvin and Pringle, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, 196.

¹⁵³ Collins and Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary on the Gospel of Mark*, 324.

orderly arrangement, and the supernatural catering. Herod's party ends in the tragic conclusion, while Jesus' banquet ends in everyone's satisfaction.

“Green grass” is described only in Mark. The vivid description of the color might be the evidence of an eyewitness,¹⁵⁴ and it is also a simple fact when considering the season at that time. John mentioned that the Passover was near. (John 6:4) The grass is still green in the Palestine of March or April, which is around the Passover, but it turns brown when the summer begins.¹⁵⁵ Mark and John seem to give the seasonal implication differently. The description of the green grass strongly supports the shepherd image of Jesus. When Jesus saw the crowd first after disembarking, He thought of them as the sheep without the shepherd. However, He became now the shepherd for the crowd,¹⁵⁶ and He led them to the green pasture as in Psalm 23. There was a three-fold repetition of the wilderness image in the scene #1, #2, and #4. If it is like reflecting the reality of the crowd's miserable life, the green grass image seems to reflect the crowd's changed status after meeting the eternal shepherd. Hooker argues that the description of the green grass is not necessarily related to the chronological perspective, but it should be seen in the aspect of the Messianic age.¹⁵⁷ Isaiah 35:1 says, “The wilderness and the desert will be glad, And the Arabah will rejoice and blossom.” The imagery shift from the wilderness to the green grass seems to imply the eschatological restoration, which is presented by the coming of the Messiah.

¹⁵⁴ France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 266–267.

¹⁵⁵ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 270.

¹⁵⁶ Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, vol. 34A, 341.

¹⁵⁷ Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark*, Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1991), 166.

The crowd sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. (v. 40)

The Greek text writes, καὶ ἀνέπεσαν πρασιαὶ πρασιαὶ κατὰ ἑκατὸν καὶ κατὰ πενήκοντα. The successive repetitions of the same word and paronomasia (the effect by the similar sounds) function to draw the reader's attention in this scene.

³⁹ καὶ ἐπέταξεν αὐτοῖς ἀνακλῖναι πάντας **σμπόσια σμπόσια** ἐπὶ τῷ **χλωρῷ χόρτῳ**.

⁴⁰ καὶ ἀνέπεσαν **πρασιαὶ πρασιαὶ** κατὰ ἑκατὸν καὶ κατὰ πενήκοντα.

πρασιαὶ πρασιαὶ is normally translated into the same meaning of σμπόσια σμπόσια, which is “in groups.” πρασιαὶ literally means “bed in a garden,” “garden-plot,” and the verb form, πρασίζω is “to be greenish.”¹⁵⁸ However, the noun form came to mean the regular arrangement of the group in Markan usage.¹⁵⁹ When considering the original sense of the word, it arouses the atmosphere of green pasture in Psalm 23, and it also seems to imply the outdoor banquet.¹⁶⁰ In this respect, this scene's lexical usages are closely related to the shepherd imagery and the banquet imagery.

The orderly arrangement recalls the newly established administration system of Israel after the exodus. When Moses received the advice about the administration from Jethro, he organized people in groups of 1,000, 500, 100, and 10 under the appointed leaders. (Exod 18:25; Num 31:14) Afterward, the Qumran community followed this practice.¹⁶¹ Also, in the aspect of preparation before the miracle, it recalls Elisha's feeding miracle. Elisha let the widow prepare

¹⁵⁸ Henry George Liddell et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 1460.

¹⁵⁹ Marcus, *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 27, 408.

¹⁶⁰ Collins and Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary on the Gospel of Mark*, 324.

¹⁶¹ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, 192.

the vessels as much as she could. This preparation enabled her to receive efficiently the blessing of the miracle that occurred by Elisha. Likewise, the orderly grouping might let the crowd receive the food efficiently, preventing it from causing a rush and being crowded.

Edwards focuses on the atmosphere of the revolutionary uprising related to the historical background in this episode. He indicates some Galileans who stood against the Roman Government. Certain Galileans expressed the sentiment for independence when Herod the Great came to power in B.C. 37 and died in B.C. 4. Sepphoris the Galilean revolted against the succession of his sons.¹⁶² Moreover, the Zealot movement revolved around Galilee in A.D. 6, and Acts 5:37 mentioned it. According to Josephus, Judas the Galilean was the leader of the movement and had a strong revolutionary sentiment.

Under his administration, it was that a certain Galilean, whose name was Judas, prevailed with his countrymen to revolt; and said they were cowards if they would endure to pay a tax to the Romans, and would, after God, submit to mortal men as their lords. This man was a teacher of a peculiar sect of his own, and was not at all like the rest of those their leaders.¹⁶³

Judas' two grandsons became the leaders of the resistance. Manahem, one of Judas' grandsons and called the Galilean, invaded king Herod's armory and gave weapons to his people and other robbers.¹⁶⁴ Eleazar, another grandson, was a potent man, and he persuaded many Jews not to submit to Roman taxation.¹⁶⁵ Josephus, who provided this information, was also the commander who fought against the Roman invasion.¹⁶⁶ When considering this historical sentiment, several

¹⁶² Ibid., 194.

¹⁶³ Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 604–605.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 625.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 762.

clues such as the crowd in the isolated place, Jesus the Galilean (Luke 23:6), and the orderly arrangement seem to recall the revolutionary army's image.

Kim sees Jesus' feeding miracle in light of the new exodus.¹⁶⁷ As Moses liberated the Israelites under Egypt, Jesus liberated the people under sin and suffering. Both two leaders of liberation have something in common, that is the feeding miracle. The people under oppression could know the new provider, ruler, and the one whom they should depend on through the feeding miracles. Galilean revolutionary leaders sought political liberation, but Jesus wanted the crowd to have spiritual freedom from sin and suffering. This different intention of Jesus changed the violent and revolutionary atmosphere related to the historical background to the non-violent but powerful spiritual revolutionary sentiment. In this respect, this episode's overall atmosphere is not only idyllic in the aspect of the shepherd image and festive in the aspect of the banquet image, but it also gives revolutionary and radical sentiments in the aspect of the new exodus.

Jesus took, blessed, broke, and gave. (v. 41)

The narrator focuses on the four actions of Jesus. The four verbs are called eucharistic verbs, λαμβάνω, εὐλογέω, κλάω (κατακλάω)¹⁶⁸, δίδωμι, and the same as in the Last Supper.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, 194.

¹⁶⁷ Kim, "The Wilderness as a Place of the New Exodus in Mark's Feeding Miracles (Mark 6:31–44 and 8:1–10)," 62–75.

¹⁶⁸ Two verbs have very similar meaning in dictionary, but when the preposition is prefixed to verbs, some changes occur in the definition. Generally, there are three cases. "First, a preposition can add its basic, local meaning to the verb. Second, prefixing a preposition to a verb can intensify the verb's meaning. Last, prefixing a preposition to a verb can change the meaning of the verb altogether." This verse might correspond to the second case, "intensifying." David L. Mathewson and Elodie Ballantine Emig, *Intermediate Greek Grammar: Syntax for Students of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2019), 93.

¹⁶⁹ France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 267.

The lexical usage consistency shows the relationship between the feeding miracle and the Last Supper that will occur after one year.

Mark 6:41(Feeding the five thousand)	Mark 14:22 (The Last Supper)
<p>λαβὼν τοὺς πέντε ἄρτους καὶ τοὺς δύο ἰχθύας ἀναβλέψας εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν εὐλόγησεν καὶ κατέκλασεν τοὺς ἄρτους καὶ ἐδίδου τοῖς μαθηταῖς</p>	<p>λαβὼν ἄρτον εὐλογήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς</p>

The four actions were the typical custom of Jewish meals. When the Jewish husband or father takes the bread, he customarily gives thanks for the bread, breaks it, and gives it to the family members.¹⁷⁰ Jesus followed the Jewish custom as if the crowd were all family members. This scene seems to show the formation of the spiritual family. In the Last Supper, the bread means the flesh of Jesus. John 6:56 says that humans can be unified with Jesus when eating Jesus’ flesh. When considering Jesus’ sayings, the feeding is not only for hunger, but it also symbolizes the spiritual union with Jesus, bringing about a new spiritual community based on the new covenant. Indeed, Jesus wanted to be spiritually unified with the disciples and the crowd.

“Looking up,” ἀναβλέψας is the participle of ἀναβλέπω. It is frequently accompanied by prayer and blessing. (Mk 7:34; Job 22:26–27; Lk 18:13; Jn 11:41; 17:1.)¹⁷¹ “Blessed,” εὐλόγησεν is the aorist verb of εὐλογέω and used by the Synoptics, but John only writes

¹⁷⁰ Brooks, *Mark*, 109.

¹⁷¹ France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 267.

differently, εὐχαριστήσας, which is the participle of εὐχαριστέω. Collins and Attridge explained the difference between the two verbs.

The former is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew בָּרַךְ (“to bless” or “to praise”), which was probably the most commonly used term for prayer among Jews in the first century.¹⁷² The latter is roughly equivalent to the Hebrew הִתְחַלֵּף (“to give thanks”). The latter is also the verb more commonly used in relation to early Christian ritual meals. At the same time, however, a prayer of praise or thanksgiving may have been said at the beginning of ordinary meals, both by Jews and Christians.¹⁷³

It is necessary to admit a slight difference in lexical meanings between two terms, but both words might not be inappropriate to be used in this context since both words may be used in the meal context. Mark 8:6, another feeding miracle, employed εὐχαριστέω, instead of εὐλογέω. These usages show the interchangeability of two words, at least within the meal context.

Some scholars tend to ignore the supernatural essence in this miracle. Instead, they try to change this episode into a moralistic story. The perspective brought about a preposterous and inadmissible story: everyone started to share the food that they already had since Jesus’ compassion moved them.¹⁷⁴ Presumably, it might be because the process of how the bread and fish are multiplied is very briefly described without enough explanation. Based on the brief description, they imagine as much as they can do. However, Mark includes the simple but concrete grammatical ground for the miracle occurrence. It is the employment of ἐδίδου, which is the imperfect tense of δίδωμι, “give.” Luke and John simply describe it by using the aorist

¹⁷² Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 15–16.

¹⁷³ Collins and Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary on the Gospel of Mark*, 325.

¹⁷⁴ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, 193.

tense form, while Mark and Matthew vividly present the scene, using the imperfect tense form. The aorist is like a snapshot that displays an occurrence in the summary and overall view from the outside, not presenting internal elements.¹⁷⁵ However, the imperfect tense tends to display the action as the ongoing process, including a variety of specific usages, such as instantaneous, progressive, ingressive, iterative, customary, pluperfective, conative, and imperfect retained in the indirect course.¹⁷⁶ In this context, the employment of the imperfect verb might denote the iterative image of giving.¹⁷⁷ It shows that the action of Jesus' giving is continuously repeated, emphasizing the occurrence of the miracle that the bread is not shrinking. The narrator in Mark does not only report the summary of the miracle, but it tries to deliver the vivid atmosphere in that situation.

They all ate and were satisfied. (v. 42)

The narrator narrates the final resolution of tensions from all conflicts. Before Jesus' feeding, the disciples and the crowd might be hungry, and they needed to stop listening to the words of Jesus. After the disciples suggested dismissing the crowd, Jesus demanded a more difficult request. They could not know how to respond to the request of Jesus to give them the food. However, the miracle that Jesus performed resolved all these suspense and tensions at once. The short description of the conclusion is the dramatic resolution. The original motive of Jesus' miracle was compassion on the crowd. Then the miracle's result was the satisfaction of the crowd. It was not only the satisfaction of the crowd and the disciples but also Jesus. Their

¹⁷⁵ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: an Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament with Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 555.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 541-552.

¹⁷⁷ Stein, *Mark*, 317.

physical satisfaction seems to symbolize the eternal life that Jesus really wanted to give them through Himself. When they truly believe in Jesus, they will have this eternal life and not be hungry anymore.

Collins and Attridge argue the consistency between v. 42 and Psalm 78. The psalm is about Israel's history and includes the story of God's provision in the wilderness. Psalm 78:29 says that the people ate (the manna and quails) and were completely satisfied, for He gave them what they craved.¹⁷⁸ The disciples and the crowd might come up with the manna in the wilderness when they saw the miracle and became satisfied with the food. Since the one who fed their ancestors in the wilderness was God, this miracle could be the crucial hint that Jesus is God himself. Thus the satisfaction contains more meaning than simple physical satisfaction.¹⁷⁹ Their satisfaction was the fulfillment of the messianic banquet in Isaian prophecy and the result of the coming of the eternal shepherd who leads them to the green pasture. Their status changed from the sheep without the shepherd to the sheep who shall not want as in Psalm 23:1.

Also, this satisfaction might be applied to the military image. In this episode, the figurative usage of the shepherd, the orderly arrangement, and the historical background related to the Galilean revolutionists might arouse the military imagery. After the feeding miracle, the crowd was like the army who became satisfied and ready to fight. They had the trust and confidence in Jesus, who is their leader. Ezekiel 37 is the prophecy related to military imagery. In the vision that God showed, when God put the breath into the dried bones, they came to life and became the great army. The vision of Ezekiel and the feeding miracle are similar in the

¹⁷⁸ Collins and Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary on the Gospel of Mark*, 326.

¹⁷⁹ Brooks, *Mark*, 109.

aspect of the radical difference between the beginning and the end, in addition to the army imagery. The original food used for the feeding miracle was like God's breath into the dried bones in Ezekiel 37. The small amount of food resulted in the outstanding provision, and the miserable crowd became satisfied.

The twelve full baskets (v. 43)

What Jesus originally received from the boy was the five barley loaves and two fish, but the leftovers became the twelve full baskets. It seems to show the superabundance of the messianic banquet. The plot of Elisha's feeding miracle in 2 Kings 4:42-44 has a similarity with Jesus' feeding miracle.¹⁸⁰ Elisha also received the twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain from a man, and he said to his attendant, "Give it to the people and let them eat." The attendant could not understand Elisha's intention, but the miracle occurred, and the one hundred people ate and had some leftovers. 2 Kings 4:42 says that Elisha is the man of God. After the feeding miracle, John 6:14 says, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world." The consistency between Jesus' feeding miracle and those in the Old Testament may make it more certain that Jesus is the one whom God sent.

The basket, κόφινος, was a large and heavy basket for carrying things and it might have various sizes.¹⁸¹ These baskets were used in the fishing boat as containers for the fish that they caught.¹⁸² Jews must have usually used this item when they traveled because Decimus Junius

¹⁸⁰ Strauss, *Mark*, 277.

¹⁸¹ Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 563.

¹⁸² Stein, *Mark*, 317.

Juvenalis, a Roman poet, satirized Jewish travelers with the κόφινος.¹⁸³ Interestingly, Josephus said that the basket was also the personal equipment that the infantry soldiers should carry in the Roman army.¹⁸⁴ Some historical explanations related to κόφινος have a strong relevance within this episode due to a boat as their transportation tool, the Jews, and the faint military imagery in some scenes.

When it comes to the symbolic value of the twelve baskets, there are two different viewpoints. On the one hand, Strauss and Stein reject the symbolic interpretation of the number twelve. The reason why the twelve baskets were mentioned is simply that the twelve disciples carried them.¹⁸⁵ On the other hand, Brooks, Collins and Attridge, Marcus, and Lane focus on the Judaic symbolism related to the number twelve. This perspective becomes evident when compared with the numbers of the feeding miracle in the gentile setting. (Mk 8:1-10) The “five” and “twelve” in the geographical setting of Judea recall the image of Israel, while “four” and “seven” in the gentile area seem to imply the gentile atmosphere as mentioned in v. 38.¹⁸⁶

Those who deny the symbolistic approach might think that the author does not give any evident mention in the text, and it may be able to lead to allegorical interpretation. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the result of interpretation when accepting the numerical symbolism in this episode. Marcus, who accepts the symbolism, argues that the twelve full baskets mean the “eschatological fullness of the people of God.”¹⁸⁷ Collins and Attridge say that the “number

¹⁸³ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 411.

¹⁸⁴ Josephus and Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, 643-644.

¹⁸⁵ Strauss, *Mark*, 277, and Stein, *Mark*, 317.

¹⁸⁶ Yoo, “Four Gospels’ Perspective on Jesus’ Feeding Five Thousands,” 1-49.

¹⁸⁷ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 411.

recalls the hope for the restoration of the twelve tribes in the time of fulfillment.”¹⁸⁸ Brooks also mentions “Christ’s superabundant provision for his own people Israel.”¹⁸⁹ Lane focuses on the symbolic implications more than the simple numbers in Mark’s two feeding miracles, arguing that the author intentionally arranged them.¹⁹⁰ When assuming the overall plot in this episode without the twelve baskets, Jesus had compassion on the crowd, who is Israelites, and He taught them, healed them, and performed the feeding miracle. Finally, they became satisfied through the miracle. All that Jesus did in the isolated place was to give them satisfaction and restoration in the physical and spiritual aspects. It is consistent with the message that the numerical symbolism gives. There is no difference between the conclusions of the practical approach and the symbolic approach. Instead, the perspective of numerical symbolism more strengthens the core message of this episode.

Five thousand men ate the loaves. (v. 44)

The four Gospels have respectively different wrap-ups of the same episode. Luke concludes that everyone was satisfied, and there were twelve full baskets. John says that people tried to take Him by force to make Him king. However, Matthew and Mark focus on the number of people in the last statement. Mark states that five thousand men (ἄνδρες) ate the bread, and Matthew adds the number is except the number of women and children. Counting the number of men was always necessary for the war in the Old Testament. God commanded Moses to count the number of men who can go out to war in Israel in Numbers 1:1-3. David also ordered Joab to

¹⁸⁸ Collins and Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary on the Gospel of Mark* 326.

¹⁸⁹ Brooks, *Mark*, 109.

¹⁹⁰ Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, 343–344.

number Israel men who can draw the sword in 1 Chronicles 21:1-5. In this respect, the men's number in the final statement might imply the spiritual army of Jesus. When considering the historical background related to the Galileans' insurrectionary motive, this statement seems to reflect the author's message of the spiritual revolution.

One of the Markan literary features is the description of the amazement (1:22, 27; 2:12; 5:15, 20; 5:42; 6:51; 12:17).¹⁹¹ Mark often described the responses of people after the teachings and miracles of Jesus. However, even though the feeding miracle was an amazing event, he does not mention people's responses of amazement. John only recorded the inner thought of people who wanted to make Jesus a king. This incomprehensible absence of responses might be due to the arrangement of the crowd before the feeding miracle. The venue of the miracle occurrence might be a little distanced from the arrangement of people, and it might be difficult for all people to see the miracle closer when considering the size of the crowd. The people who could see it vividly might be only the disciples who carried the bread and the fish, and some people who near the disciples might see the amazing spectacle. Consequently, the overall atmosphere was silent, not recognizing what was happening. Thus the Gospels' authors could not write the overall crowd's responses. John 2:9 provides a similar example, which is the first miracle at Cana. When the water became the wine, anyone could not know where it came from, but the servants who had drawn the water knew.

Also, this brief record of the crowd's responses seems to be related to the Messianic self-concealment in Mark. The Messianic secret is one of the important Christological themes. Jesus often commanded for the secrecy of the Messianic identity (8:29-30; 1:25; 1:34; 3:11-12; 5:6-7),

¹⁹¹ Strauss, *Mark*, 277.

the transfiguration (9:9), healing miracles (1:43-44; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26), His presence (7:24; 9:30), and even His teachings were done privately and secretly. (4:12, 34; 7:17; 9:28-29, 30-31; 10:10-11; 13:3)¹⁹²

The purpose of the miracle was not to fanaticize the crowd for Jesus. Jesus had compassion for them and just wanted to feed them. Thus He does not need to reveal the miracle publicly. In this respect, Jesus' spiritual revolution is different from the Galilean political insurrections. Jesus did not want to use them for political purposes, but He wanted to give them something due to compassion. Jesus silently disappeared when the original intention was completed. When considering the near context of John the Baptist's abrupt death together, the final silent statement seems to suggest how the disciples should behave in their last moment. The calling as the disciple is not for the glory in the visible world but the glory of the invisible God's kingdom with humility and sacrifice.

¹⁹² Stein, *Mark*, 24.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

History

There are two historical facts in this episode to think about in light of historical-contextual analysis. First, it is necessary to consider the historical context of when the feeding miracle occurred. Second, the historical circumstances when Mark was written should be considered. The three plausible dates of writing Mark are commonly related to the persecution from the Roman regime. Also, when it comes to the times of Jesus' ministry (around A.D. 1), there had been some revolutionary uprisings by Galilean leaders before Jesus performed the feeding miracle. People at that time wanted to be liberated from the oppression of the Roman government, but all trials for liberation failed in the end. They could realize the absence of enough power and leadership to stand against Rome. In this respect, the rise of the new spiritual leader, Jesus, must be a significant issue for Jews. Both the witnesses in the times of Jesus and the readers of Mark might rely on Jesus in light of their political reality. Surprisingly, however, Jesus did not use His divine power and authority to overcome the current situation politically, even though He had enough power to do so. This episode never includes Jesus' evident political utterances and actions. Instead, Jesus focused on better things, such as teaching, healing, and feeding the crowd with a compassionate motive. Jesus suffered from their spiritual misery like the sheep without a shepherd, more than the political situation they encountered. Thus Jesus did not liberate them politically but finally died on the cross for the salvation of people whom He loved. The new exodus motif and shepherd imagery as the military leader were fulfilled in light of the spiritual attack and liberation through exorcism and healing. This is the crucial point that Jesus in Mark was different from God who conquered the Canaanites with power and that Jews could not easily understand Him. Presumably, it seems to imply that the readers should

evangelize the Roman Empire according to Jesus' way, not trying to resist them with political power. In this respect, Mark's message must have given a new light to the readers of Mark of how they should see their reality and what is more worth.

Literature

When dividing one episode into five scenes, it may let the readers absorb into each scene. Every scene has its own features, such as setting, character, narrator's focus, and the conflict stage. The literary analysis of distinguished scenes might help understand the regular transition pattern and well-designed dramatic flow. As mentioned in the introduction part, the books of the Gospel are the written version of the oral proclamation of the Gospel, challenging to define the specific genre. When considering that the Gospel was originally proclaimed by the mouth of the evangelists, they might seek to deliver it in a more effective way for the audience, and thus it might be necessary to describe a painting-like scene in the audience's imagination. The total sum of each scene that includes the distinguished features may make the dramatic flow in the plot. It is conducive to forming suspense and tension that the reader can be immersed in the message of the episode.

Besides, it is important to perceive the arrangement of the feeding miracle episode. John the Baptist's death in the center of the sandwich structure plays a significant role in understanding the feeding miracle in the discipleship aspect. The bigger story of Mark 6:7-44, except the middle story, is about the successful ministry, including the disciples' and Jesus' miracles. This cannot reflect the true discipleship that requires sacrifice. Thus the middle story, the death of John the Baptist, is critical because it balances the whole story in light of the

discipleship. The extended story, Mark 6:7-44, includes both sacrifice and success in order to present that the glory without suffering cannot show true discipleship.

In addition, the literary emphasis through the narrator's description, wilderness imagery, shepherd imagery, banquet imagery, eucharistic imagery, military imagery, and symbolism reflected in the lexical usages make the episode more abundant in the reader's imagination. These implicit imageries could make the readers be immersed in the episode, connecting it with diverse messages in the Old Testament and the New Testament, especially revealing who Jesus Christ is. Even though this episode is a short story, it contains a host of compressive and connotational delivery with biblical consistency.

Theology

In the Christological aspect, Mark has three unique portrayals such as Jesus' concern of rest (v. 31), shepherd motif (v. 34), and the dialogue between Jesus and the disciples to find out what they had. (v. 38) These descriptions present how Mark uniquely understands the feeding miracle of Jesus. According to Mark, Jesus had compassion for the disciples as well as the crowd. Furthermore, Jesus' motive of compassion is more strengthened through shepherd imagery which is the frequently used motif in the Old Testament. In addition, Mark describes the interaction between Jesus and the disciples right before finding the loaves and fish. Jesus let them find out, and they obeyed it and found out the food. Compared to other Gospels, Mark only added the portrayal of Jesus' kind instruction for the disciples who must have been confused. In Mark 6:31, when they returned from the mission, Mark only described Jesus' concern about the fatigue of the disciples, suggesting to move to an isolated place. Likewise, Mark did not omit the delicate sense and actions of Jesus for the disciples in verse 38, guiding the disciples in detail. In

this respect, Mark presents that Jesus is more delicate as to the disciples and more like the shepherd as to the crowd than other Gospels.

When seeing the feeding miracles in the four Gospels, it can be perceived that the feeding miracle is the fulfillment of the Isaian prophecy. Jesus is the host of the eschatological banquet. Indeed, the feeding miracle does not mean only to feed the hungry crowd, but it also symbolizes the fulfillment of ultimate salvation for those in sin and suffering. When Jesus saw the crowd as the sheep without the shepherd, He saw the miserable soul, not their physical hunger. In the eucharistic context, eating bread symbolizes the union with Christ. Jesus did not give them only the loaves and fish but also wanted to give them Himself who is the source of life. Thus Jesus' compassion in verse 34 is closely related to the spirit, not the body.

When it comes to discipleship, this episode also shows the disciples' ministry as the extension of Jesus' ministry. The disciples performed healing and exorcism when they were sent to the crowd as Jesus did, and they acted as the extension of Jesus when they gave the loaves and fish to the crowd. When considering the essence of discipleship in Mark 8:34, the disciples should follow behind Jesus with the same heart. They should not go ahead of Jesus. However, the authors of the Gospels indicate their mistake, describing hasty actions and impatience. The disciples could not even imagine the feeding miracle, and even they tried to take the initiative by stopping Jesus' ministry. Mark seems to hint at how the disciples should behave through the immediate context, which is the death of John the Baptist. The miracle occurred when the disciples gave up their initiative and followed Jesus' commandment. Indeed, true discipleship includes self-denial and cross-bearing, following Jesus Christ, not going ahead of Him. At last, it might be led to the martyrdom like John the Baptist. Despite their lack of faith, Jesus did not give

up loving them and using them as the disciples. The compassion of Jesus covers even the blindness and ignorance of the disciples.

Consequently, the disciples' impatience makes stand Christ's unlimited patience out. So likewise, the ignorance of the crowd who overlooked the Messiahship of Jesus also even emphasizes Christ's boundless compassion. Of course, this miracle did not seem to bring about any immediate change in their faith, but today's readers may find the beautiful patience and compassion of Jesus behind the story. This miracle is not about the love and sharing among the crowd that Paulus mentioned, but the love and miracle of Jesus who endures for us. Paulus described as if people were easily touched and became generous, but in fact, they were still stubborn and ignorant. In this episode, only Jesus is gracious and compassionate.

When considering Strauss's indication, "discipleship builds on Christology," Jesus' compassion is another point that the disciples should follow. However, this moralistic lesson could not crush the divine nature of the feeding miracle. Jesus' moral perfection always coexists with His divinity. The motive of the feeding miracle was compassion, but the divine power implemented it. The feeding miracle proves that Jesus is the Messiah who loves sinners and He also has the divine power to save them from their sufferings and sins. When thinking about the feeding miracle, neither of them should be negligible.

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