Marking the Pattern: Concealment and Revelation in Mark's Gospel

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A pattern for discipleship

When I begin a class on the Gospel of Mark, one of the first observations students make is that the Jesus Mark's gospel proclaims is often a puzzling, strange Jesus. They notice this as early as the first chapter, when some of Jesus' first words are commands to silence and secrecy (1:25).[1] In this observation, they are participating in a scholarly trend that dates back centuries, crystallized in modern scholarship by William Wrede's *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien* (1901), or *The Messianic Secret*.[2] Wrede was interested in the ways that Jesus commanded silence in the Gospel, and scholarship has often followed his lead.[3] More recently, scholars have considered how this secrecy in Mark could be related to sociological concerns like honor and shame,[4] or broader theological concerns related to christology and discipleship.[5]

Because readers expect the Gospels to provide revelation about Jesus' identity, they often overlook the fact that Mark does this as well. The secrecy is the challenge. What is interesting, however, is that if we take a broader perspective on both secrecy and revelation, we can see something unique in Mark. Secrecy in Mark is not just about keeping secrets about Jesus' identity: there are many ways that silence, mysteries, privacy, and lack of insight contribute to a broader theme of concealment throughout the Gospel. However, this theme of concealment is always accompanied by revelation or proclamation. It is not that proclamation triumphs or always gets the final word, but that Mark's gospel is saying something about the interplay between silence and speech, and between concealment and revelation. Even more, recognizing the pattern of these events points to a larger theological contribution of Mark's narrative.

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By pattern, I mean that concealment and proclamation are not just consistent pairs throughout the Gospel, but they are also ordered in particular ways. Early in the Gospel it is common for proclamation to lead to concealment, as when Jesus silences an unclean spirit who proclaims that he is the Holy One of God (1:24). Other episodes in Mark begin with this pattern but reiterate proclamation, as when healed individuals tell others rather than keeping silent (e.g., 1:41-45). At times, the concealment is related primarily to the disciples' misunderstanding (4:40-41), but the proclamation is clear to Mark's audience, thanks to the narration or the narrator. This point highlights the fact that this interplay between proclamation and concealment affects Mark's audience differently than it affects the characters in the Gospel narrative.[6]

1. The only recorded words of Jesus that precede these are the summary of the gospel (1:15) and his calling of the first disciples (1:17).

2. Trans. J. C. G. Grieg; Cambridge: James Clarke & Company, 1971.

3. For a helpful survey of scholarship on secrecy since Wrede see M. M. Jacobs, "Mark's Jesus Through the Eyes of Twentieth Century New Testament Scholars," *NeoT* 28 (1994): 53-85 and Christopher Tuckett (ed.), *The Messianic Secret* (IRT 1; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

4. David F. Watson, *Honor Among Christians: The Cultural Key to the Messianic Secret* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010).

5. John R. Donahue, "Jesus as the Parable of God in the Gospel of Mark," *Int* 32 (1978): 369-386; Donald H. Juel, *A Master of Surprise: Mark Interpreted* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994); Ira Brent Driggers, *Following God Through Mark: Theological Tension in the Second Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007).

6. I use audience and readers interchangeably, recognizing that

The second type of pattern that we see in Mark is when concealment or secrecy comes first, and then leads to proclamation. This pattern emerges in occasions where the secrecy is geographical in nature. For example, Jesus withdraws to a private or secret place (1:35), but once the disciples find him the word about his ministry is proclaimed far and wide (1:38). Concealment leads to proclamation. There is a similar pattern when individuals in the Gospel are silenced by others (e.g., Bartimaeus, 10:48-52). The crowd's attempts to silence result in louder proclamation. Finally, when people try to silence Jesus, even in death, proclamation is the result. This is the narrative exposition of Mark 4:22, "For nothing is concealed except that it might be revealed."

The third and final version of this pattern, however, underlines the complexity of these issues in Mark, and why secrecy continues to be the primary framework for the Gospel's scholarly discussion. Jesus' teachings on parables (4:10-12) reveal as much as they conceal. Moreover, in Mark's narration of Jesus' time at Gethsemane, and in his Easter account of the Empty Tomb, concealment and proclamation are both present, but not in the form of a predictive pattern or linear process. Instead, they are interwoven, with concealment and proclamation occurring simultaneously. Furthermore, Mark uses literary signals to link these two narratives, maintaining what we find throughout the rest of the Gospel: The blending of secrecy and revelation is where the Gospel displays theological power.

The theological power displayed through these interwoven connections is primarily concerned with the audience's discipleship. Historically, Markan scholarship has not focused on the effect of secrecy on the audience. This is in large part because the audience is introduced to many of the secrets. From Mark 1:1, we see that Jesus' messiahship is not a secret to Mark's readers. Even so, the narrative is still secretive and reticent, keeping even the audience in the dark about some things.[7]

Upon further consideration, however, we can see that the three versions of this pattern of concealment and disclosure all affect the audience in three different ways. The connection between this pattern and discipleship emerges when we notice that, with one exception, every episode of proclamation and concealment that occurs in the Gospel takes place in the presence of Jesus' disciples.[8]

The secrecy in Mark is not only about the knowledge of Jesus' identity, but it also includes more mysteries and silence. And the pattern between this concealment and revelation illustrates that the focus is also not just about knowing who Jesus is, but also is about how to live as his disciples.

Therefore, it is clear that the effects of the interplay between concealment and proclamation are connected to one's discipleship. In other words, this is not just a messianic secret. A messianic secret refers to knowledge of Jesus' identity (i.e., christology). But that knowledge only accounts for the first effect the pattern of concealment and disclosure has on Mark's audience—it expands their knowledge when proclamation leads to concealment. Beyond this, the interplay of hiddenness and revelation aims to increase their hope, as concealment leads to proclamation, and their faith, when the two are integrally mixed. Therefore, a messianic secret is too small in two ways—in content and in impact. The secrecy in Mark is not only about the knowledge of Jesus' identity, but it also includes more mysteries and silence. And the pattern between this concealment and revelation illustrates that the focus is also not just about knowing who Jesus is, but also is about how to live as his disciples.

Considering three patterns in detail

Overall, Mark's gospel unites concealment and revelation in three different sequences. It is important to state that while these categories provide a heuristic guide to overall patterns in the Gospel, narratives are not so easily systematized. Mark's gospel often resists imposed categorization, so it will be unsurprising to find variance within these patterns. Nevertheless, this survey illustrates that there *is* a pattern: wherever readers find concealment in Mark's gospel, they also find revelation. The differences among these patterns promote correspondingly different responses in readers. Specifically, proclamation that leads to concealment increases the reader's *knowledge* of christology and discipleship. Concealment that leads

most of the early audiences of the Gospels were not readers, but those of later generations are. Furthermore, when I discuss the effect Mark's gospel has on "the audience," I refer to what could happen for the implied audience. It does not guarantee this outcome for every audience of the Gospel.

7. Some "secrets" and misunderstandings may easily be interpreted as a difference in historical context (see Mary Ann Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel: Mark's World in Literary-Historical Perspective* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989], 87) but there are portions of the narrative (esp. 4:10-12; 8:14-21) that context is unlikely to have clarified all the mysteries. See Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 65.

8. The one exception is Mark 14:61-62. At first, Jesus' silence is emphasized twice. Then, when the chief priest inquires about Jesus' identity as "the Christ," Jesus speaks affirmatively and quotes Daniel 7:13 LXX. This is certainly an important proclamation of the Gospel. Yet even here, Jesus' proclamation does not negate the emphasis on silence throughout the narrative of his trial and death; the two are held in tension. This article does not consider 14:61-62 in detail as it is the only episode that does not occur in the presence of Jesus' disciples, and the focus here is on how the pattern of concealment and revelation affects the Gospel's call for the audience's discipleship.

to proclamation increases the readers' *hope* for the realization of Jesus' stated purpose, to proclaim the good news (1:14-15, 38). And the overlap of concealment and revelation augments the readers' *faith* as it enlarges their theology.[9] The following section considers each pattern in more detail.

Pattern 1: Proclamation before concealment: Audience's knowledge grows

This pattern is the most obvious way that hiddenness and revelation work in Mark's gospel. It includes Jesus' commands silencing those he heals or from whom he casts out unclean spirits (1:25; 5:43), and notes that there is always some revelation (1:24, 42) that is then concealed by this silencing. This pattern occurs in two types of narratives, exorcisms and healings.

In exorcisms, Mark's gospel emphasizes the knowledge that the unclean spirits have (1:34; 3:12), which is passed along to the reader through their proclamation. So, Mark's audience learns that Jesus has come to destroy these unclean spirits (1:24; cf. 1:12-13) and that Jesus is the Son of God (3:12; cf. 1:1, 11), while recognizing that Jesus' commands to silence are proof of his authority over this speech (1:25-26).

There is a similar pattern in healings. After four healings in the Gospel, Jesus prohibits speech in some way. Each of these healings occurs either explicitly (5:35-43; 7:31-37; 8:22-26) or implicitly (1:41-45) in private, thereby correlating with Jesus' geographical secrecy (see *Pattern 2*, below). In each healing, someone asks Jesus to heal, and each time the narrator proclaims the effectiveness of Jesus' healing (1:42; 5:42; 7:35; 8:25). This narration is the proclamation, a sign that the gospel brings healing to those in need (1:34, 38). Jesus then commands silence (1:44; 5:43; 7:35-37; 8:26).[10] Therefore, concealment follows proclamation.

In two out of these four healings, however, someone disobeys Jesus' command to silence and proclaims the good news widely (1:44; 7:36). Therefore, proclamation both precedes and follows concealment. In the chronology of the Gospel's narrative, these four healings alternate between those situations where Jesus' command to silence results in further proclamation and those where silence reigns (1:44 and 7:35-36 in contrast to 5:43 and 8:26). Furthermore, the two healings which conclude in concealment have deep ramifications for Mark's christology and discipleship: the raising of Jairus' daughter serves as an allusion to Jesus' own resurrection (*egeire*; 5:41; 9:27; 16:6) and the blind man's two-stage healing indicates the necessity of divinely cleared perception to understand the things of God (8:26; cf. 8:33).[11] In this way, the silencing is a signal to the reader that the narrative has not yet told the full story. Proclamation is paused until after the resurrection (9:9).[12]

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To summarize: in these famous prohibition passages, whether exorcisms or healings, proclamation always occurs before Jesus commands concealment, and in exceptional circumstances, it also occurs afterward. The distinct forms of these proclamations are directed toward increasing the readers' knowledge. When proclamation of the healing does not occur, Mark's audience is encouraged not only to understand the healing, but also to seek whatever eschatological knowledge is required before the healing can be proclaimed.

There is one final category of this pattern, where proclamation precedes concealment. It occurs in a different context where concealment is related to the disciples' misunderstanding. A casual reader of Mark often finds the disciples to be bumbling and limited in their perspicacity. However, readers typically characterize the disciples like this because what is clear to the audience is opaque to the disciples. For example, when the disciples are perplexed and terrified as Jesus calms the storm, their fearful question about who Jesus is tells the audience some central characteristics of Jesus: he *is* the one whom the wind and seas obey (4:41). In this way, what is concealed to the characters is proclaimed to the audience (cf. 6:14-16).

The narrator emphasizes this pattern by pointing out the disciples' inability to understand what Jesus is saying or doing. The first time in which the disciples obviously do not understand occurs immediately after they see Jesus walking upon the water. They are terrified (6:50). While the potential echoes of Jesus' proclamation, "It is I" (*egō eimi*) ring in the ears of the audience (Exod 3:14-15; Isa 43:10), they pass unnoticed by the hardened hearts of the disciples (6:52). The second time their hardened hearts are mentioned, however, things change. The proclamation

9. This enlarged theology is the payoff of the door imagery that Donald Juel uses, emphasizing the torn veil, the empty tomb, and a God "on the loose" (*A Master of Surprise: Mark Interpreted* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994], 117-121).

10. Only in some ancient manuscripts is the blind man commanded to silence (8:26).

11. Joel Marcus, *Mark 8-16* (AYB 27A; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 600-602.

12. Wrede understood the importance of the timeliness of revelation (Mark 9:9), but he did not see its limitation. It is only for these proclamations, not for every aspect of secrecy in the Gospel, some of which remained concealed post-resurrection (*The Messianic Secret*, 67-70).

that accompanies their misunderstanding remains unclear to the audience (8:14-21). In this way, the disciples' misunderstanding encompasses the audience as well, including them in the experience of this opacity (see *Pattern 3*, below, for another example). This makes it uncertain what type of knowledge the audience should gain, if any. Therefore, the narrator may be subverting this pattern, particularly at a crucial point in the Gospel when proclamation, to both disciples and readers, is at a height (8:27-9:7).[13] Overall in this pattern, when proclamations are made, whether or not the characters understand them, the audience's knowledge increases. When concealment affects the audience, however, they are reminded that discipleship in Mark is more than knowledge (8:34-38).[14]

Pattern 2: Concealment before proclamation: Audience's hope encouraged

In three different contexts in Mark readers encounter concealment followed by proclamation. Jesus and other characters participate in this pattern, which encourages Mark's audience to hope that revelation and proclamation will have the last word (4:22), even if they are not the Gospel's last word (16:8). Concealment leads to revelation in three different types of situations: geographical secrecy, where Jesus withdraws to a private place (sometimes with his disciples); situations in which characters are silenced by others (i.e., not by Jesus); and times where Jesus himself is silent when asked to speak.

Geographical withdrawal occurs either when Jesus seeks solitude (1:35; 6:31) or when Jesus seeks to teach the disciples privately (e.g., 7:24; 9:28; 9:30).[15] Each time, some type of revelation follows this geographical concealment. While the revelation is sometimes solely for the disciples (9:29, 31), it is often for the crowds as well (1:38; 6:35-44; 7:24, 29). In fact, after he has withdrawn from the crowds in Galilee, Jesus explicitly states that his purpose in ministry is to proclaim (*kērussō*) the good news (1:14-15, 38-39).[16] Proclamation follows concealment; with this revelation there is hope for more to come.

In other contexts in the Gospel, conversations themselves illustrate the interplay between silence and spoken revelation.

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One example is when the disciples silence themselves in shame because they were talking about who among them is the greatest (9:34) and Jesus follows with a proclamation about the first being last (9:35-37). Another illustration occurs when Bartimaeus is silenced by the crowd and then encouraged by Jesus who proclaims his healing (10:48-52). Peter is an interesting example in this context: as spokesperson for the disciples (e.g., 1:37), he is often speaking. However, at Jesus' transfiguration he is speechless, presumably due to his theophanic experience (9:6). While Peter's speech at the transfiguration is not revelatory—it only evidences his confusion—the voice from heaven, who declares, "This is my son; listen to him!" (9:7) confirms and elaborates on the revelation that the three disciples are seeing. This situation provides hope for the audience that God's revelation is not dependent on Peter's (or any disciple's) understanding.

Early in the Gospel, Jesus is silenced twice by those close to him (3:21; 6:3, 6). His family thinks he is insane (3:21: *exestē*), and those he encounters at Nazareth see him only in light of family connections (6:3). Therefore, they miss his message and ministry. His true family is composed of those who do God's will (3:35; cf. 14:36). This revelation counters the silencing effect of his family and provides an inclusive hope for Mark's audience: they too could be part of Jesus' family. At Nazareth, the silencing has greater effect; Jesus does not preach for long there, and in fact, is only able to heal a few people (6:5). Instead of people being amazed at him (cf. 5:20; 6:51; 12:17; 15:5, 44), Jesus is amazed at those in Nazareth for their lack of faith (6:6). However, the fact that even in this context Jesus is still able to heal people signals revelation taking place.[17] There is good news, even if it is limited in its scope. These slices of revelation against the dark background of silencing increase the audience's hope for light in the darkness.

13. Jesus' direct command to the disciples not to tell anyone about his messianic identity mirrors the proclamation → concealment → proclamation pattern, as Jesus implicitly affirms Peter's claim that he is the messiah, commands silence, and concludes with an open (*parrēsia*) proclamation of the future trajectory of the Son of Man (8:29-32).

14. This is supported by the disciples' actions, in that they continue to follow Jesus, and are successful at the mission he gives them (6:7-13, 30) despite their lack of knowledge and understanding (4:13; 6:52; 8:14-21).

15. Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*, 36-38.

16. It is not as though Jesus leaves the deserted place simply because he has had enough time alone. Instead, he leaves because Simon and others found him and told him that "everyone is searching for" him (1:37), which produces this focus on proclamation. This passage shows the tension between concealment and proclamation even at the beginning of Mark's narrative.

17. See Pattern 1: In Mark, teaching about the kingdom of God is never just about spoken words, but also includes actions that demonstrate the in-breaking of God's presence and action (1:14-15; 1:21-27).

Pattern 3: Revelation embedded in concealment: Audience's faith expanded

In Mark 4:10-12, Jesus says what amounts to the Gospel's most famous aside. To those around him with the twelve disciples, Jesus proclaims that the mystery of God has been given. Yet, to "those outside" (*tois exō*) everything is in parables, preventing perception and understanding and forgiveness. This enormously challenging text has produced its own library of scholarship, but here we are mostly concerned with how the text illustrates a pattern of simultaneous revelation and concealment, communicated through the setting, the verb forms used, the use of the term mystery (*mysterion*), and the fact that the recipients of this teaching are described as insiders and outsiders.[18]

At the beginning of this passage, Jesus again is alone (*kata monas*), yet also with more than just the twelve disciples around him (4:10). Nowhere else in the Gospel is Jesus so explicitly surrounded by both the twelve disciples as well as an additional group that is more specific than a crowd. This semi-private location communicates both revelation, to the disciples and others, and secrecy from a larger group (4:1).

The verbs used in this passage (*dedotai, ginetai, aphethē*) are all used in a way that obfuscates their agency. It seems relatively logical to assume that God is the one who gives the mystery of the kingdom of God, but the passage leaves this up to the audience's interpretation.[19] Furthermore, saying "all things come in parables," is ambiguous about both the agency and the subject. The grammar of this passage uses language of revelation, and yet the passage itself describes the concealment more than the revelation.[20]

When this text uses the term mystery (*mysterion*), it is using language of revelation and concealment. The mystery in Mark alludes to the mystery of God's plan from the beginning, now given to those around Jesus.[21] However, the content of this mystery is unclear in Mark, and while those around Jesus have been given this mystery, they do not seem to have received it in a way that changes their actions or knowledge of either heavenly or earthly things (8:33). Instead, this mystery should be considered a "dimensional mystery," which is not an investigative mystery that can be solved, but rather is a mystery that transcends rational thought, so that it cannot be resolved.[22] Therefore, this mystery is given to the disciples, but they receive it, rather than understanding it.

The destabilization of the categories of insiders and outsiders indicate the interplay between concealment and revelation. The audience does not even know who has been given revelation and who has experienced concealment because at this point, it seems that everyone has some of both.

Lastly, Mark's narrative turns the tables on insiders and outsiders in this section, such that those the audience expects to be insiders are outside, and vice versa. As noted earlier, Jesus' family, presumably insiders, are shown not to be Jesus' true family because they oppose him and therefore are against God's will (3:21, 35). However, the disciples and others, who have been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, apparently do not understand the parables (4:13), marking them as outsiders, too (4:12). Therefore, those outside cannot simply be those who misunderstand Jesus, whether family or opponents, because that is everyone in the Gospel by 16:8; alternately, it means that forgiveness and restoration may not be as out of reach for the outsiders as it seems in this context (4:12). Here, however, the destabilization of the categories of insiders and outsiders indicate the interplay between concealment and revelation. The audience does not even know who has been given revelation and who has experienced concealment because at this point, it seems that everyone has some of both. This places Mark's audience in a position to wait and see if resolution—or full revelation (4:22)—will come later in the Gospel.

This passage describes revelation through the gift of a mystery but conceals the content or framework of that gift. This combination of hiddenness and revelation creates a setting that is conducive to increasing the audience's faith. Faith in Mark, as elsewhere in Scripture, is a concept that includes ideas like belief, but it emphasizes relational trust (e.g., 9:23).[23] The fact that Jesus mediates this revelation through Israel's scriptures (Isa 6:9-10) further augments the call to trust in a God who has been faithful and active in the past, even if the present reality is defined more by concealment. The disciples in Mark are called to trust Jesus even if they do not have the knowledge to fill out that trust (4:13, 40-41). Similarly, the audience finds themselves potentially in the same place that the disciples are if they receive the mystery of the kingdom of God

18. For more details on this argument, see Laura C. Sweat, *The Theological Role of Paradox in the Gospel of Mark* (LNTS 492; London: Bloomsbury T. & T. Clark, 2013), 28-62.

19. For the most cited discussion calling *dedotai* a divine passive (implying that God is the subject of the verb "to give") see Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (trans. S. H. Hooke; 2nd rev. ed.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), 15-16. OT texts emphasize Gods' role in enabling or preventing hearing or sight (Deut 29:3 LXX; Isa. 32:3; 35:5; 50:5).

20. Markus N. A. Bockmuehl similarly develops an emphasis on the revelatory effects of mysteries (*Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity* [WUNT 36.2; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1990; repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997], 124-125).

21. This reflects the use of the term *to mysterion* at Qumran, particularly in 4QInstruction 417.6, 11-13, 18. See Matthew Goff, *The Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom of 4QInstruction* (STDJ 50; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 31-33 and Sweat, *Theological Role of Paradox*, 40-44.

22. Steven D. Boyer and Christopher A. Hall, *The Mystery of God: Theology for Knowing the Unknowable* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 4-13.

23. See BDAG, 818-819.

without understanding it. Therefore, this emphasis on concealment could enlarge the audience's sense of theological mystery.

A tangled pattern: Gethsemane and the Empty Tomb

So far in our survey of hiddenness and revelation in Mark's gospel, we have not covered any texts in the passion narrative. In part, this is because concealment seems to function differently in Mark 14-16: a darkness descends at Gethsemane and does not lift until Sunday morning at the empty tomb. Therefore, the narrative pattern, pairing concealment and revelation, changes at Jesus' trial and death and deserves a closer look on its own. For the sake of time and space, we will consider the beginning and end of this narrative section: Gethsemane and the Empty Tomb.

At Gethsemane (14:32-42), Jesus withdraws, not just from his disciples in general, but even from Peter, James, and John (14:33, 35; cf. 5:37; 9:2). In this way, when Jesus prays, his words are hidden from the disciples and yet revealed to Mark's audience. This is particularly important given the emotional despair of Jesus' prayer.

Similarly, Mark's audience sees the contrast between the disciples' repeated sleep (14:37, 40-41) in spite of Jesus' requests to "keep awake" (14:34, 37-38: *grēgorgeite*; 13:33, 35, 37). While this sleepiness might simply be fatigue (14:40), the narrative at least implies that the heaviness of their eyes is due to God's intervention.[24] This sleepiness results in mental fogginess: they do not know how to answer Jesus' questions (14:40; cf. 9:6). This silence is reminiscent of earlier situations in the Gospel where the disciples' misunderstanding resulted in their silence (e.g., 6:52; 9:33; 10:32). The audience of the Gospel is set apart from the disciples again, because their knowledge is greater than these characters.

Continuing the narrative's theme of concealment by muteness, Jesus himself is silenced by the arrival of Judas, who comes to arrest him "while [Jesus] was still speaking" (14:43). Jesus only speaks four more times in the rest of the Gospel. Once is at his arrest, signaling that scriptures will be fulfilled (14:49) and asking why he was not arrested in public (14:48). During the three other times, Jesus confesses that he is the Messiah and prophesies again about the coming of the Son of Man (14:62); he acknowledges Pilate's description of him as king of the Jews (15:2); and from the cross he cries words from Psalm 22:1 (15:34).[25] Therefore, during the passion narrative, the overwhelming emphasis is on Jesus' silence, rather than his speech (14:61; 15:5).[26] In fact, since Jesus' disciples

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are silent and flee (14:50) or deny him (14:66-72) or remain at a distance (15:40-41), Jesus' opponents are the primary figures who speak in this section of the Gospel. Yet their speech deafens their ears and reveals the truth to the audience through Mark's use of irony (e.g., 15:29-32). Despite this shaft of revelatory light, even the weather is structured to emphasize the concealment in these accounts: whether it is night (14:17-72) or darkness at midday (15:33), light does not return to the narrative until morning dawns in 16:1.

Lastly, the final image before Jesus' trial is one of the most perplexing in the whole Gospel: a young man (*neaniskos*) flees in silence and in naked shame (14:51-52). His flight mirrors the disciples' (14:50) as he is the last of them to flee. His nakedness implies the shame in the disciples' flight: this anonymous follower prefers to risk the shame in nakedness rather than the shame in being arrested with Jesus.[27] One aspect of the story that differentiates the young man's response from that of Jesus' followers is that he continues to follow Jesus after the other disciples have fled; he only flees once he is seized (14:51). In this way, the young man is caught like Jesus (14:46), but he flees like the disciples (14:50, 52).

Nevertheless, Mark's Gospel is not done with a young man (*neaniskos*). He becomes a narrative link as we encounter another *neaniskos* at the empty tomb (16:5).[28] Where the first *neaniskos* was silent, this *neaniskos* proclaims the good news of Jesus' resurrection (16:6). Where the first *neaniskos* fled, this one arrives at the tomb before any of the women (16:5). Where the first *neaniskos* is naked in his flight, this young man is clothed in a white robe (16:5; cf. 9:3). The parallels continue between the young man and the disciples, because if he is still their representative, he signals their restoration.[29] Furthermore, he sheds light on the disciples' future purpose by mediating Jesus' words, just as the disciples are to do in the future (13:9-13). It is clear that the young man is

24. If God is striking the shepherd and therefore scattering the disciples, then it would make sense that sleep, which prevents the disciples from keeping watch and praying, creates a situation in which they are guaranteed to fall away (14:37-41).

25. It is notable that in three of these four statements, Jesus either refers to "the scriptures" (*hai graphai*; 14:49) or quotes scripture (14:62; 15:34). Given the role that scripture plays in the overlap of concealment and revelation (see below), much of Jesus' continued speech in the passion narrative is consistent with this pattern.

26. William Sanger Campbell, "Engagement, Disengagement, Obstruction: Jesus' Defense Strategies in Mark's Trial and Execution Scenes (14:53-64; 15:1-39)," *JSNT* 26 (2004): 283-300.

27. Howard M. Jackson, "Why the Youth Shed His Cloak and Fled Naked: The Meaning and Purpose of Mark 14:51-52," JBL 116 (1997): 273-289 [277, 286].

28. This is not a historical link, claiming that the two young men are the same person; Mark gives no indication of this. Instead, these young men function literarily in the narrative, signaling shifts that are manifest through a comparison of their descriptions.

29. Andrew T. Lincoln, "The Promise and the Failure: Mark 16:7, 8," *JBL*108 (1989): 283-300 [293].

also Jesus' representative here because he knows what others do not; he knows where Jesus is. He echoes Jesus' own words: Jesus is going to Galilee to meet the disciples there (16:7; cf. 14:28). He functions as a revealer, just as Jesus had.

The extreme darkness of Gethsemane, the connection of the *neaniskos* at both Gethsemane and the empty tomb, and the reversal of his characterization provide great hope to the audience that the silence, despair, and darkness of Gethsemane, the trial, and Jesus' death will be reversed by an equally marvelous and pervasive revelation at the empty tomb. Unfortunately, as readers of Mark know, this hope is muzzled by the fear and silence of the women in response to the young man's proclamation (16:8). Markan scholars have proposed many different ways to read 16:8 as the ending of the narrative.[30] All of these attempts struggle with the fact that readers expect the women to proclaim what the young man tells them.[31] The question that remains is why Mark's gospel might have been content to conclude with silence and concealment, rather than with proclamation and revelation as we would expect.

Therefore, something besides silence and proclamation is occurring at this narrative climax. There is another connection between Gethsemane and the Empty Tomb accounts concerning the fulfillment of prophecy. Immediately prior to the Gethsemane narrative (14:26-31) is a passage alluded to within the Empty Tomb account (16:6-7). The final time that Jesus predicts his resurrection in the Gospel and tells the disciples that he will go ahead of them to Galilee (14:28), he also prophesies the flight and failure of the disciples (14:26-27). Using adapted words from Zech 13:7, Jesus predicts that all of them will fall away.[32] The cause of their falling away, much like the cause of misunderstanding in 4:12, is God's action. This is evident in the change from the LXX or MT of Zech 13:7, which in Mark contains a unique first person pronoun: I will strike the shepherd.[33] God's striking of the shepherd is what scatters the sheep; by analogy, God's action in bringing about Jesus' death also brings about the disciples' desertion. As with all of his

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previous passion predictions, Jesus proclaims both his future death and resurrection (14:27-28; cf. 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34). This is the last prophetic prediction that Jesus will make to his disciples in Mark's gospel. Narratively, this places additional emphasis on this final prophecy, particularly since it concerns events that have been prophesied previously in the narrative.

At first, it seems that Jesus' prophetic words about the disciples falling away are fulfilled soon after he makes them, reminiscent of the fig tree near Jerusalem (11:12-25). After all, Mark 14:50 reads: "All of them deserted him and fled." Jesus' prophecy includes those referred to as, "you," mentioned in 14:27. Presumably, this would be the disciples. However, Mark 15:40-41 claims that female disciples have been following Jesus since Galilee—the beginning of his ministry. They apparently were not included in the "all" of those who fled at Jesus' arrest (14:50), since they are watching his death (15:40). The question arises for the audience: are they part of Jesus' prophecy in 14:27? Has Jesus' prophecy, and the scripture he alluded to, not been fulfilled?

Indeed, it is clear that the second half of Jesus' prophecy is fulfilled at the empty tomb, when the young man tells the women that they should tell the disciples and Peter that Jesus is going ahead of them to Galilee (16:7; 14:28). The first half of Jesus' prophecy is also fulfilled at the same time by the women's response to the young man's proclamation. When they respond in fear and silence, they too fall away, even if it is in a different context than the other disciples do (14:50). Therefore, the negative aspects of this prophecy, death and desertion, are not finally fulfilled until the women fail to speak and conceal the proclamation in their silence. However, the positive aspects of Jesus' proclamation have already begun to be fulfilled, as Jesus is risen and he has gone ahead to Galilee (16:6-7). In this way, the women's silence and fear looks like concealment (cf. 4:41; 5:15, 17; 5:33; 6:20, 50-52; 9:33; 10:32), but it is actually revelation of the complete fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy that all will fall away (14:27).

This observation does not explain why the Gospel neglects the positive fulfillment of Jesus' prediction as well, so that the women proclaim that all will be restored in Galilee (14:28; 16:7). The emphasis on the fulfillment of Jesus' words (especially in Mark 11-14) gives the audience confidence that the women's silence is not the final word. By remembering the context of the Zechariah quotation, the audience recalls that God will strike the shepherd

30. Joel F. Williams ("Literary Approaches to the End of Mark's Gospel," *JETS* 42 [1999]: 26-35) describes five different ways to read 16:8 as the ending of Mark: (1) the women's fear is a positive reaction; (2) the women's failure prevents the disciples' restoration; (3) the ending is ironic to make the audience think; (4) the lack of proclamation from the women should increase the likelihood of proclamation by the audience; (5) 16:8 hinges on both God's promise and human failure.

31. Such expectations are supported by Mark's endings; Matthew 28:8-10; Luke 24:11; John 20:16-18; and the logic of reading Mark's gospel (Juel, *The Messianic Secret*, 115).

32. Kelli S. O'Brien (*The Use of Scripture in Mark's Passion Narrative* [LNTS 384; London: Bloomsbury T. & T. Clark, 2010], 124-125) argues that the explicit citation formula, "for it is written," is used only here in the passion narrative to emphasize that the shameful defection of the disciples was predicted, and therefore not a surprise to Jesus.

33. The LXX and MT traditions of Zech 13:7 both begin by saying "Rise up, O Sword, against my shepherd(s)." The MT concludes the passage by saying, "Strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered," such that the sword performs the scattering. The LXX uses plural imperatives for "strike" (*pataxate*) and an additional verb, "draw out" (*ekspasate*) such that it is seems that other, non-specified agents perform Yahweh's requested actions. See Sweat, *The Theological Role of Paradox*, 117.

causing the disciples to fall asleep and fall away. It is God's action at work. Similarly, in the Mark 4:10-12 passage quoting from Isaiah 6, it is a hidden God who blinds and deafens to conceal. If God's agency is seen both in Isaiah 6:9-10 (Mark 4:10-12) and in the fulfillment of the Zech 13:7 prophecy, there is every reason to believe that the women will faithfully proclaim the message given them after completing the prophecy fulfillment, because God has not abandoned them. Even their actions, which appear to conceal God's agency, reveal it through the lens of these texts from Israel's scriptures. The women's silence is proclamation that Jesus' prophecy is fulfilled giving specific confidence in this prophecy; namely, that even if the Gospel does not narrate it, there is no reason to doubt Jesus' resurrection and rendezvous with the disciples in Galilee. Recalling these scriptures and Jesus' words, the audience's faith can grow as God's mysterious action is revealed and hidden in surprising places, even an empty tomb.

Conclusion

Instead of focusing on the content of secrets in Mark, this article has focused on the patterns of concealment and revelation within the Gospel. Recognizing these patterns illustrates that wherever there is concealment in the Gospel, revelation is nearby. Since Jesus' disciples are always with him in these contexts, this pattern logically has implications for discipleship. Each time that Mark's gospel describes concealment (and therefore, revelation), Mark's audience is affected differently. When proclamation comes first, Mark's audience is encouraged to increase their knowledge, as whatever is being silenced is constructive for their theology. When concealment comes first and proclamation occurs afterward, Mark's audience is inspired to increase their hope, because the trajectory of the good news, and of Jesus' preaching (1:14-15, 38) points toward eschatological proclamation. However, when proclamation and concealment are found together, particularly with citations of Israel's scriptures (Mark 4:10-12//Isa 6:9-10 and Mark 14:26-31//Zech 13:7), Mark's audience is in a position to increase their trust, as they are to recall God's faithful action even in the places in the Gospel that look most like concealment (blinding outsiders and Jesus' death). Mark seems to teach us about discipleship amid the unknowns by showing how the pattern revelation and concealment serves theological purposes for the Gospel, enlarging the audience's theological knowledge, hope for the future, and trust in the present.

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