

Chapter Five

Recognise Law and Order

(Text 1)

The Gospel of Mark

Section A: Law is Based upon Authority

When the writer of *Reality Search* first picked up the gospel of Mark with the intention of looking for some sort of analysis of it there was an air of optimism. For the annalist this was not a totally new experience. A couple of years of part-time data entry work had provided an opportunity to listen to tapes of the whole gospel. Over the monotonous hours of going through 120,000 copies of the same A4 questionnaire sheet (!), the gospels were the only subject that never bored. There was a parallel here with the work groups of the first century. They could have sat around making tents etc and listening while the whole gospel was read or while it was read out in a handful of sections. At the time the data entry opportunity to listen to the gospels at length triggered a question as to how the major sections of these were put together into the whole. What were the underpinning structures of the gospels? A loose sketch of Luke's structure was made.

When one goes through the first chapters of Mark it is apparent that Jesus is going from place to place. So it is an easy task to jot these places down and pick out an obvious teaching point. As one continues to read

the text however it appears there is a point where it appears that a background story or drama is being understated. This is where the mother of Jesus and his brethren come to take him away because "they thought he had gone mad". This drama stands out in particular in a literal translation from the Greek text into English. Such a translation was being made by the analyst a few years before with the help of a university tutor. One could only wonder. "What sort of background family crisis was going on here?" At the time of doing the *Reality Search* analysis it seemed that this was an appropriate place for a break in the structure of this whole gospel.

On going back over the places that had been listed before this spot it became apparent that a pattern of places was being repeated in reverse. There was a comparison between the first place and the last place. Both referred to home (Nazareth and the home of Jesus). Then the 2nd and 2nd last places referred to "into the hills" and "the wilderness". The 3rd and 3rd last places referred to the "sea". The 4th and 4th last place referred to the Synagogue. The 5th and 5th last places referred to a house. The 6th referred to an isolated place and grain fields. The 7th refers to Jesus coming out (one assumes from his house) and Jesus coming out of his private life. The 8th reference was "throughout all of Galilee (which includes its sea) and the sea of Galilee. The 9th point does not have a pair as it sits in the middle of the list of pairs.

In terms of obvious teaching points each of these paragraphs appears to have a point similar to its pair. Thus an obvious point in the first paragraph has parallels with the last paragraph etc.

In fact some parallels between the pairs are quite extensive than can be summarised in a few words here. Sometimes there are whole sentences and key phrases that are the same.

A list of these places is as follows:

1. Nazareth
2. . into the desert
3. Galilee/Sea
4.Capernaum/ Synagogue
- 5..... House of Simon
- 6..... Lonely place
- 7..... came out (of home)
- 8..... Galilee/seaside
- 9..... Capernaum/Home
- 8..... Beside sea
- 7..... . came (out)
- 6..... .Grain fields
- 5..... House of God
- 4.....the Synagogue
- 3..... Sea
2. . . .Into the mountain
1. Home

The discovery of a teaching point in common to both paragraphs of a pair could not be described as interpretation of the text in the usual sense. Rather, in this pattern a points was taken that was obvious and which was common to the pair. After compiling the list of common points it was found that all of these fitted quite comfortably under a common heading for the Section.

Consider as follows:

The first and last paragraphs in Section A both refer God's will. The 2nd pair of paragraphs refer to good and bad disciples and good and bad spirits. The third pair refers to preaching and disciples are involved. There is a need for support to be given to Jesus in his preaching outreach. The fifth pair of paragraphs refers to the need for priority to be given to people. The 6th pair refers to the need to pray and the need to eat. Thus priority is given to respect for human needs. Both of the 7th paragraphs refer to a new order (c/f new wine skins). Both paragraphs in point 8 refer to the gathering of crowds. The 9th and final point talks about the authority to forgive sins. After these nine points were isolated, it could be seen that all of them had a bearing on authority.

In studies done in Scripture over the years there had not been mention of such a concentric paragraph circle in the gospel of Mark. But this was not surprising. As mentioned, a concentric circle of water images in the gospel of John had already been discovered by the analyst and there was no mention of that in references either. In this case with no references to quote in a Bibliography, an attempt to write up an essay on the 'water circle' in course work for a Master's Degree in Theology did not make the grade. No references, no mark.

Within the *Reality Search* analysis the pairing of the paragraphs in Mark's Section A resulted in a list as follows.

Authority:

1. Is based upon God's will
2. Extends to good and bad
3. Requires support
4. Challenges corruption
5. Gives priority to people
6. Respects human needs
7. Can innovate new order
8. Reaches to crowds
9. Is ready to forgive

Section B

Order is Based upon a Sense of Direction

On having completed a structure outline for Section A an attempt was then made to analyse the next Section. It was considered that this would probably be approximately the same length as Section A. Because the Gospel continued to list places there was a continuation of jotting these down as well as an obvious teaching point for each paragraph.

Again it was found that a concentric circle of paragraphs exists in Section B as well. Some of the ten places listed were not always obviously paired. But a match with their opposite number could still be made. Others places and paragraphs were obviously a pair.

The pattern formed is as follows:- the first and last places were at the sea. The 2nd and 2nd last places were Jesus being alone and then at Bethsaida. Are these the same? Some

disciples came from Bethsaida and the group could have had access to what was similar to a retreat place there. The 3rd places refer to the "other side" of the sea. The 4th places refer to the countries of Gerasines and Dalmanutha which were both beside the sea. The 5th place is again the sea. The 6th places refer to Jesus in a house. In the first house of this pair he cures the daughter of Jairus. In regards to the 2nd house of this pair he cures the daughter of a Syrophenician woman. The 7th pair refers to Jesus in his own country and in a house away from the crowd. The 8th pair refers to a desert place and out of a ship (apparently in an isolated place). In the 9th place he goes to a mountain to pray and to Gennasarit where they are anchored. The 10th place has no pair because this is in the middle of this circle. This paragraph describes the adventures of the disciples when they are caught in the middle of the sea in a storm and Jesus calms the storm



A picture of places in this section is as follows:

1. The sea
2. . alone
3.the other side of the sea
4.the country of Gerasines (beside the sea)
- 5.....other side of sea
- 6..... in a house c/f Jairus' daughter
- 7..... own country
- 8.....desert place
- 9.....mountain
10. in a boat in a storm
- 9.....anchored
- 8..... out of a ship
- 7.....in house away from crowd
- 6.....in a house c/f Syrophenician's daughter
- 5.....the sea
4.the country of Dalmanutha (beside the sea)
3. . . .the other side of the sea
2. Bethsaida to outside
1. The sea

There is a striking resemblance between the central place in paragraph ten and the central place in John's water circle mentioned above. In both cases the disciples are featured in a boat at sea in the middle of the storm. In the case of Mark's Section B he makes a strong point about the inability of a 'hard heart' to understand what is going on.

Consider the comparisons of points made within the pairs of

Section B.

In the first pair, both of the paragraphs refer to differing hearing and responsiveness of people who hear the gospel message. In the 2nd pair Jesus tells people to perceive and a man cured of blindness first sees people as trees, walking. Both these paragraphs refer to perception. The 3rd paragraphs refer to the question of who is this person Jesus. In the 4th pair a herd of pigs run into the sea. People don't quite understand why Jesus allowed this. The 2nd paragraph of this pair has the Pharisees seeking a sign. In both cases the bigger picture is more complex than people are ready to realise. In the 5th pair a woman tries to touch Jesus to be healed. In the 2nd of this pair, Jesus cures a deaf and mainly dumb man by spitting and touching his tongue. In both cases personal contact is important. In the 6th pair a daughter is brought back to life and in the 2nd of these two paragraphs a daughter is cured. In neither case, this appears likely to happen. Why? In the first case people laughed that Jesus should attempt this feat. In the 2nd case it was not expected here either as the girl's mother was not a Jew. In both cases Jesus showed belief in his own power. In the 8th pair Jesus multiplies loaves to feed a huge crowd. In the 2nd of this pair his disciples walk through a grain field rolling corn cobs together and eating the corn. The Pharisees criticised the disciples for not washing their hands. In the 1st case they could not have washed their hands either. But surely the need to eat takes precedence over formalities. In the 9th pair Jesus prays and a boat is anchored. There is an inference here that retiring to pray is a way to stay anchored. In the case of this pairing it is interesting to note that while the two places may not be strikingly the same, the size of the paragraphs are both very short as compared with

the others. The short paragraphs appear to be a way of punctuating the importance of their point in common.

As mentioned above the 10th point here refers to a storm and the disciples are in the middle of it. The writer here (Mark) demonstrates that hard heartedness must be a key thing to overcome in a society where a sense of direction is also needed.

In *Version One of Reality Search* it was pointed out that in terms of the concentric circle relating to time/law a key need appears to be forgiveness (putting self in the place of others). It appears that in Section B there is a key need to have a responsive heart (that is, allowing time to reflect and then to take action).



For the sake of refreshment of memory, the list of paired points in Section B is as follows:-

For a sense of direction

1. Be receptive
2. Perceive as well as see
3. Note dignity of the person
4. Realise the big picture is complex
5. Value personal contact
6. Believe in own power
7. Avoid bad actions
8. Don't overstress formality
9. Stay anchored
10. Avoid hard heartedness

Need for a Literal Translation

The analysis of the gospel of Mark (c/f *Reality Search*) with Sections A and B takes up to Chapter 9 (c/f traditional markings of chapters and verses). When the *Reality Search* analysis was first being made the whole gospel was typed out onto A4 sheets. At this time it was becoming more obvious that an exact translation of the texts was needed in order to continue, Accuracy of translation was crucial as shades of meaning and paragraph "hooks" could be omitted in the looser wording of a paraphrase.

However while a literal translation was needed for credibility of the *Reality Search* analysis, such a translation is not fluent. The dual needs of accuracy and fluency in the overall production of *Reality Search*, was therefore covered so that *Version Five* provides a literal translation and *Version Four* is a paraphrase of it.

The literal translation used in *Reality Search* comes (with permission) from the 1968 edition of the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament. This was done by Reverend Alfred Marshall. The 1968 RSV translation was in itself a breakthrough in ecumenism. It was accepted by all church denominations and was described at the time as one of the most faithful translations of the original Greek text.

Section C

A Golden Rule is the Way of the Child

In the process of doing the analysis in *Reality Search* it was considered that upon reaching Chapter Nine there was an apparent break in the structure of the gospel. The text here was now talking about the child. This new Section C did not appear to fit in with the rhythm of structure found in the two previous Sections. Because of this the passages here were largely passed over. Later on it was realised that "the child" is presented here in Mark as the model for people who can operate in all types of societies. It was also realised that since 'the child' does not belong to or identify with one of the time/law or place/order types of society then neither does a description of his or her framework of living, fit in with the patterns in which these are described.

Section D The Power of One

In making the *Reality Search* analysis of Mark's gospel, it was apparent that as Jesus and the group around him began to head towards Jerusalem and his crucifixion, this would most likely start a Section D for the gospel. But here it would be

unlikely paragraphs could be differentiated by places because everything would be taking place in and around Jerusalem.

In looking at this Section D it became apparent that a range of people were being mentioned with a range of responses to Jesus. Pairs could be found in terms of the responses made. Consider as follows:

The first pair of paragraphs both mentioned "they" and also reference was made to their fear. The 2nd (and 2nd last) paragraphs both mentioned a group of people with reference to a place that is, sitting on the right of Jesus (in the coming kingdom and in the tomb). This pair had a point about "place getting" . In the 3rd pair, both people asked to see Jesus. In the 4th pair there was crowd pressure objecting to the son of David title in one paragraph in the other about the King of Jews title. In the 5th pair Jesus is helped by a colt that carries him. Then Simon of Cyrene is shown to be carrying his cross. In the 6th pair on the one hand children greet Jesus with "Hosanna in the highest" and in the other soldiers mock him with "Hail king of the Jews." The point in common here was seen to be a matter of Jesus' own belief in himself. In the first paragraph of the 7th pair the chief priests, scribes and elders ask Jesus "By whose authority?" In the second of this pair they ask Jesus "Are you king of the Jews?" The 8th pair shows the Pharisees asking about a coin with Caesar's face on it. Jesus tells them to give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar. In the other paragraph of this pair the chief priests etc usurp the role of Caesar by condemning Jesus to death. A point in common here is related to the rights of civic authority. In the 9th pair there was reference to deceased persons living like angels without marriage. The other paragraph of this pair

referred to a young man fleeing in a nightgown (c/f a shroud). A point in common here was seen to be connected to regeneration. The 10th point actually had two parts. The first half of the pair refers to an individual loving and to an individual betraying. The 2nd half of this pair refers to a crowd hearing Jesus gladly and then all of the crowd fleeing. The paragraphs here are divided into two halves because instead of being in the concentric circle pattern of ABBA they are in the pattern of AB then AB. It appears that the writer is deliberately tying together aspects of both individual and corporate responsibility. There is an implication that individual and corporate guilt cannot be separated out either. The 11th pair of paragraphs refer to 'one of the disciples'. In the first of this pair Jesus foretells the destruction of the temple. In the 2nd of the pair the chief priests and elders who relied on the temple system are mentioned. It appears there is a cross inference here pointing out that with the destruction of the temple precincts, the temple system (with its priests etc) will also be finished. This in fact happened around the time the gospel was written in 70AD which was when the Roman army laid a siege to Jerusalem and destroyed it. There is an irony in the pairing of the 11th paragraphs. The chief priests were plotting to destroy Jesus but their failure to heed his warnings was leading to their own destruction instead.

In the 12th pair, both paragraphs mention the disciples Peter, James and John and both mention the need for watchfulness. The 13th pair of paragraphs both mentions people seeking Jesus, either to kill him or betray him. This pair was described in the analysis as 'plotting'.

The 14th paragraph is at the center of this circle in Mark's

structure. It tells of a woman who takes the initiative to enter a Pharisee's house to wash and anoint the feet of Jesus. Mark does not give details about the situation of the woman but this is later filled in by other writers. Luke tells us she is a public sinner from the city and she comes to beg forgiveness. John tells us she is actually the sister of Lazarus the man Jesus raises from the dead. Neither of these descriptions fit very well with each other and tradition has scarcely accepted that two such mentions refer to the same person. (But perhaps in fact they do!) John says quite definitely it was Mary, sister of Lazarus who anointed the Lord.

What Mark does tell us about this woman is that he considers her to be so crucial to the identification of what Jesus is about that she is put at the very crux of his Section D. Mark repeats Jesus' words that her good work of anointing him for his own burial will be re-told in memory of her into the future. This sentence in itself echoes the words of "in memory of me" which are used in the Christian Eucharist. It also picks up with a key theme in Mark's gospel showing Jesus to be the successor of King David. David had a kingdom as shown in the Old Testament of the Bible. But the Kingdom that Jesus is to inaugurate, reaches beyond this life and into the next one. It appears that the ointment woman recognises this as she prepares him for what is to come. In the Old Testament it was a custom for a prophet to anoint someone who was going to be king. There is the story for instance about the prophet Samuel anointing the young David.

Over the centuries people have wondered about the ointment woman and they still do. As far as the *Reality Search* analysis is concerned, it does not appear that she was Mary Magdalen

as tradition suggests. Mary Magdalen is mentioned in the last paragraph (and first pair) as being afraid and she appears to be closely associated with the people who travelled with Jesus and the disciples. In contrast Mark presents the ointment woman as being anonymous. She also causes a major upset because straight after this Judas goes off to betray Jesus. The ointment woman's placement at the center of Mark's Section D appears to suggest that she is a 'new type' of person that the Gospel is introducing. She is not the same age as a child. But she is pointing towards an "adult child" and the one who is to be 're-born'. Once again for clarity the list of points from these paragraph pairs is as follows:

The Power of One deals with:

1. Fear
2. Place getting
3. Asking
4. Crowd pressure
5. Accepting help
6. Power and mockery
7. Belief in self
8. Civic authority
9. Recognition
10. Individual & corporate responsibility
11. Crowd fickleness
12. Finding support
13. Plots and criticism
14. Taking initiative

A picture of the matching types of responses to Jesus in this last section is shown below:

1. they - afraid
- ...2. group of people .. sitting at right of Jesus
-3. people - ask to see Jesus
- 4. objection to title given to Jesus
-5. colt carrying Jesus
- 6. "Hosanna in the highest"
-7. Chief priests, scribes, elders 'By whose authority? '
- 8. give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar
-9. deceased persons living like angels
- 10. (a) individual loves
- 10 (b) crowd hears Jesus gladly
- 11. one disciple c/f temple to be destroyed
- 12. Peter James & John - need for watchfulness
- 13. Priests seeking to kill
-14. Woman anointing Jesus.
- 13. Judas seeking to betray
- 12. Peter James & John - need for watchfulness
- 11. one disciple betrays - priests and elders to destroy
- 10(a) individual betrays
- 10. (b) crowd flees
-9. man in c/f shroud flees
- 8. (power of Caesar usurped)
-7. Chief priests, elders, scribes 'Are you king of the Jews?'
- 6. "Hail king of the Jews"
-5. Simon of Cyrene carrying cross of Jesus
- 4. objection to title given to Jesus
-3. people - ask to see Jesus
- ...2. group of people - sitting at right of Jesus
1. they - fear

There is enough evidence of pairing here to support a claim to it.

