

**Resurrection narratives in the Gospel of Mark and John in light of
the existing discussions about the historical reliability of the gospels**

Master thesis

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2024

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Acknowledgments

First of all, I would like to thank Professors dr. Arco den Heijer and dr. Myriam Klinker-De Klerck for the guidance and help I received from them during the academic year 2023-2024 at Theological University Utrecht. Their comments and guidance helped me develop a broader and deeper theological perspective.

“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:7)

Abbreviations

BDAG

- Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature,
Third Edition.

H. E.

- Historia Ecclesiastica (Eusebius of Caesarea)

NIV

– The New International Version

Preface

“God is dead - it's just taking a while to get rid of the body.”¹ –states Yuval Noah Harari as a remark on a new phase of human history in his well-known book *Homo Deus*. I also sense the time of change when I am thinking about the reality of my Hungarian congregation in Romania. People tend to think more about the realm of mundane life, which slowly turns the focus away from the broadened horizon of eternal life and the implications of the resurrection of Jesus. The question of what happened at the time of the first Easter is fading away. In my view, the notable differences between the gospels around the resurrection of Christ may amplify the mentioned tendency among Christians. However, at the same time, this is the cornerstone of getting a new and broadened perspective on eternal life, just as we witness how the lives of the disciples changed when they met with the risen Jesus. Because of this, I am interested in the close observation of the resurrection narratives in the Gospels of Mark and John to facilitate another narrative than what is posed by Harari.

¹ Yuval Noah Harari, *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow* (Rochester, UK: Vintage Digital, 2016), 313.

Introduction

In the last year of my theological studies at university, I heard a sermon about the angel's message at the empty grave, sending the disciples to a Galilean meeting. According to the message, the disciples should go to Galilee to meet the Risen Christ. For the disciples, the message was a reminder of Jesus' words.

In this astonishing moment, the disciples are entrusted with a responsible mission: to carry the message to their fellow disciples and meet the Risen One in Galilee. Despite their past failures, the disciples are in a new situation with new tasks and possibilities. The message mentions Peter by name, which underlines the possibility of a new beginning in a changed frame after a shameful downfall. The meeting symbolizes the possibility of renewal in a new era. With this as a guiding principle for future church ministry, I thought that each worship occasion could be a Galilean encounter with the Risen One. When I arrived at my first congregation, I thought every Sunday could be meeting with the Risen One, and it would be easy to tell the message that was in my mind continuously: go, tell his disciples...you will see Him there. While I was inviting the church members with this message to the church, I was confronted with the fact that in the Gospel of John, Jesus sent Mary to the disciples with a different message. Someone even told me that these differences discredited the resurrection stories. Since then, the differences in the Gospels, especially in the resurrection accounts, have come to my attention. Why are they different? Could these variations be intentional, serving a more profound purpose? One can ask: are the resurrection narratives reliable accounts despite the differences?

Nowadays, a few also question the authenticity of the resurrection. Christmas appeals to us because it is about gifts and giving. We like tangible things because they can be seen, proven, and inherited. The meaning of Easter is, for some reason, beginning to slip out of our thinking because it is so intangible.

We find ourselves with less and less faith in miracles and less faith that God can change our earthbound perspective. Our focus is on accumulating more and more in this life as if there is no afterlife. We are consumed by tasks and by the urgency of our earthly deadlines. In our hectic world, we have no time to admire the beauty of nature, let alone notice its wonders.

Paul writes to the Corinthians: “If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.” (1 Cor. 15:19)

This calls us to pause, reflect, and renew our spiritual understanding. Until the Enlightenment, the credibility of miracles was not questioned, but since then, we have increasingly asked why there are no miracles today. The deistic view that God created the world and left it to itself has become part of our lives. Sometimes we may think that without miracles, God's presence in the world and our life's purposes become questionable. We want proof for everything. Miracles are hard to prove. But all miracles would become explainable by the resurrection. If we could find plausible explanations for the resurrection, then we would find it easier to believe in miracles. I think it is still relevant today to talk about, for example, how the sudden cure of terminal cancer patients can be explained.

The plausibility of the resurrection and miracles was not an issue until the Age of Enlightenment. Still, describing phenomena regarding physical laws and causal relationships pushed miracles and the resurrection to the edge of historical plausibility.

Therefore, I maintain that it is crucial to continue discussing the resurrection in our modern context. However, we cannot ignore the question of the differences between the Gospels, as they can be hard to explain and cast doubt on the historical veracity of the accounts for some.

Yet, despite such skepticism, the significance of the resurrection remains steadfast. In my view, the gospel of Mark is the earliest gospel, which bears similarities with the other gospels and gives the earliest account of the resurrection. As I think, the Gospel of John is the latest among the gospels and shows the most differences from the others. Among the most debated parts in the Gospels, as I see is the resurrection account, which can determine how we relate to our daily lives. If our doubts and questions seem to be resolved, they can lift our earthbound gaze to a different perspective.

1.1 Problem Statement

Several differences exist among the gospels' resurrection narratives, which can lead to questions about their historical credibility. Bart Ehrman states that because of these differences and discrepancies, the gospels and narratives are not entirely reliable historical sources of Jesus's resurrection. If we say there are contradictions, mistakes, and alterations of historical facts, then we say they cannot be trusted as historical evidence. He also claims that “the Bible cannot be

trusted as a historical source.”² Answering Ehrman's arguments, Craig Evans, as the opponent, asserts that the editorial work of the gospel's authors, similar to the Greek students who used brief anecdotes (chreiai), included reworking the units of the tradition that led to discrepancies. According to Evans, the disciples were not tape recorders but learners trained to understand the teaching of Jesus, not to repeat it word by word. He also mentions that among other scholars, Ben Meyer, John Meier, and E.P. Sanders think that the Gospels are more than sufficient to use as a basis for creating an image of the historical Jesus.³

What does historical reliability mean?

In his essay about the gospel's historical reliability, Michael Licona writes: “Historically reliable means that, at the very minimum, the account provides an accurate gist or an essentially faithful representation of what occurred.”⁴

History is challenging, but it matters. In comparison with other fields of science, such as chemistry, where experiments can be repeated, it is hard to analyze past events because they don't come back in history. Even if we say that history repeats itself, monumental events do not repeat. For example, a king died only once; even if we discuss more wars, we cannot say they are the same. Humans are not infallible, so mistakes will always slip into the writing of history, even if we strive for completeness and absolute truth. Can we say when we encounter half-truths that they did not happen?

Do the gospels have to be infallible to be regarded as historical texts? Robert Stewart sees historical reliability as part of infallibility, and he argues that texts that intend to inform us about the past, even if they contain mistakes, can be historically reliable. For instance, if we have health problems, we visit foreign specialists or physicians even if they sometimes make mistakes. We trust and appreciate qualified persons even if we ask for a second opinion from the same field.⁵

² Bart D. Ehrman, Craig A. Evans, and Robert B. Stewart, *Can we trust the Bible on the Historical Jesus?* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2020), 37-40.

³ Ehrman, *Can we trust the Bible on the Historical Jesus?* 51-2.

⁴ Michael R. Licona, “Are the Gospels ‘Historically Reliable’? A Focused Comparison of Suetonius’s Life of Augustus and the Gospel of Mark,” in *Religions* 10, No. 3 (February, 2019): 148, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10030148>

⁵ Robert B. Stewart, “History, Historian, and Trusting Historical Texts,” in *Can we trust the Bible on the Historical Jesus?* ed. Bart D. Ehrman, Craig A. Evans, and Robert B. Stewart (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2020), 24.

The investigation wants to explore Mark 16:1-8 and John 20 to see the role of the differences in the Synoptic Gospels and John, formulated in time the latest gospel, and whether these can be harmonized.

This examination seeks to answer the question: How can the differences in the resurrection narratives in the Gospels of Mark and John best be explained in light of the existing debate about the gospels' historical reliability? Over the course of the following chapters, I will examine the connection between the Gospel of John and Mark. Subsequently, the exegesis and interpretation of Mark 16, 1-8, and John 20 (verses that overlap) will follow, where the differences and parallels in the resurrection narratives in John and Mark will be explored. We will then delve into the various possible explanations for these differences, drawing from a wide range of literature on the subject and evaluating these explanations. My approach will be grounded in historical-grammatical exegesis of the biblical text, with a comprehensive consideration of biblical-theological aspects.

In the exegesis, I explain the text through a detailed analysis of the text, taking into account the original text and the specific cultural context in which it was written. The grammatical examination will encompass an analysis of the words' syntactical relationships. Then, a broader investigation of clauses, sentences, paragraphs, and even larger units of the accounts will follow. The historical examination keeps in mind the analysis of the text, which is a product of a specific place, time, and author, and its meaning must be understood within that historical context, thereby emphasizing the comprehensive nature of my approach.⁶

Miracles and the resurrection cannot be investigated with historical methods because of their supernatural or legendary elements. Therefore, we have to analyze how to approach their reliability.

⁶ Moisés Silva, "Who needs hermeneutics anyway?" in *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*, ed. Walter C. Kaiser jr. and Moisés Silva, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 21.

1.2 Historical reliability of the miracles and resurrection

In my opinion, the investigation of the resurrection accounts and the miracles are connected because, in light of the reliability of the resurrection, we can explain the miracles. Craig Blomberg says: “If the resurrection of Jesus really happened, then none of the Gospel miracles is, in principle, incredible.”⁷ Throughout history, many scientists have questioned miracles.

Blomberg categorizes the problem of credibility and objections to miracles into three groups: the scientific objection, the philosophical objection, and the historical objection.⁸ According to the scientific objection to the credibility of miracles, the discovery of the natural, physical laws by which the universe operates has shown that miracles appear impossible. Those who hold this view sometimes go on to explain that people were used to believing in miracles because they had only a primitive scientific understanding. However, physical science has undergone massive changes, and nowadays, quantum theory is much closer to the possibility of God's existence than it has been for generations. For example, one can ask: how can it be explained that someone in the last cancer stadium receives a blood examination report showing all the cancerous cells disappeared?

Writing about the philosophical objection as the second objection, Blomberg quotes David Hume and answers the listed four objections:

- (1) „No alleged miracle has ever been supported with the testimony of a sufficiently large number of witnesses who could not have been either deceived or deceivers
- (2) People, in general, crave the miraculous and believe fables more readily than they ought
- (3) Miracles occur only among barbarous peoples
- (4) Miracles stories occur in all religions and thereby cancel each other out since they support irreconcilable doctrines.

1. Even if it is true, it does not prove that no alleged miracle will ever have adequate testimony, and in fact, a good case can be made for affirming that the witnesses of the Gospel miracles do offer adequate testimony.

⁷ Craig L. Blomberg, *Historical reliability of the Gospels* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 150.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 104-5.

2. It is probably true, but it means that testimony about miracles must be examined with extra caution and suspicion before it is accepted. Therefore, we need to apply more stringent criteria in examining claims.”⁹

3. “The claim is directly tied to Hume's overall racism and disdain for the credibility of people in the majority of the eighteenth-century world

4. Finally, it is too superficial a generalization to be helpful.”¹⁰

Turning to the historical objection, Blomberg reports the concepts of the German scholar Ernst Troeltsch, who declared that the historian has no right to accept as historical fact the account of a past event for which he has no analogy in the present, putting in dialog with Wolfhart Pannenberg, who stated that “not the lack of analogy, that suggests something is unhistorical but only the presence of an analogy to something already known to be unhistorical.”¹¹

After deeply investigating the parallel or similar miracles in ancient history, Blomberg, quoting A. E. Harvey and recognizing his merits, writes: “We have to come to the remarkable conclusion that Jesus's miraculous activity conforms to no known pattern.”¹²

There are different types of miracles and parallels from the ancient gentile world through charismatic Judaism till nowadays. What can we do when we explain these phenomena? I find the solution in Blomberg’s second answer given to Hume, as quoted above: we must analyze them carefully and more strictly. There is a tendency to accept at least nature miracles (in which he demonstrates his power over forces in the natural world) because they don’t have counterparts in the modern sense. We encounter resuscitation or reanimation stories, and even if they sound similar to our contemporary world's hospital reports about coming back to life from clinical death, the miracle happened to Lazar is totally different from these reports. These are signs of the powerful arrival of the kingdom of God. If Jesus’ resurrection becomes believable, then the reanimation poses no problem. If it is not, then there is probably not enough positive evidence to support it.

⁹ Ibid., 108-9.

¹⁰ Craig L. Blomberg, *The historical reliability of the New Testament* (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Academic, 2016), 669.

¹¹ Craig L. Blomberg, *The historical reliability of the gospels*, 110-2.

¹² Ibid., 126-7.

1.3 Different perspectives on Jesus' resurrection

According to Dale Allison Jr., the Easter faith in the resurrection can be categorized into nine groups. The traditional Christian view insists that Jesus was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and there is no compelling reason to disbelieve it. 2. Another view deals with an empty tomb but without a miracle: perhaps there was no supernatural agent, the body was moved by someone as a sign of respect or maybe for ritual or other purposes, and the lack of a better explanation, the faith in the resurrection was spread over the world. 3. The third viewpoint is that Jesus never died, which is based on early burial, inferred from Pilate's question in Mark 15:44-45, which was already an answer against accusations of detractors who surmised that Jesus never died. 4. Hallucinations could have occurred due to the fact that the disciples could not believe or imagine their teacher's death. 5. According to another viewpoint, the disciples or some followers of Jesus pirated his body in order to provide free meals and gain some benefits after his death, stating that he was resurrected to have continuous profit. 6. Some claim that there could have been veridical visions despite the legendary empty tomb. This means that the disciples encountered Jesus, who was communicating with them. 7. An origin in pre-easter beliefs or expectations: Jesus was God's eschatological prophet, so when he suffered and died, his disciples forthwith postulated God's vindication of him. Their faith, established before Good Friday, eventually produced the legends of Easter. 8. According to a mythical perspective, Jesus was like a Greek hero, and his resurrection is similar to the pagan myths of dying and rising gods. 9. Accelerated disintegration: according to this hypothesis, Jesus' body remained in the tomb and disintegrated very quickly, his soul triumphed over death, and he was communicating with the disciples.¹³

Blomberg lists the following objections to the resurrections:

- 1.) „The swoon theory, according to which Jesus did not quite die on the cross but was revived in the tomb, managed to escape and appeared to his disciples before

¹³ Dale C. Allison Jr., *The Resurrection of Jesus* (New York: T&T Clark, 2021), 8-22.

expiring shortly thereafter, the original counterclaim of the Jewish authorities that Jesus' disciples stole the body.

- 2.) The notion that Jesus' followers went to the wrong tomb and thus found it empty, and the idea that all the witnesses of the resurrection experienced some kind of mass hallucination”¹⁴

The reasons why Blomberg stated that the Gospel accounts of Christ's resurrection should be treated at least partially legendary are the following:

- a. „The accounts resemble the myths in other ancient religions about gods who died and rose again or its similar to heavenly redeemers who come to earth to save humanity in the Gnostic writings or other fictitious literature
- b. If Mark was the earliest of the gospels to be written, then it is striking that he has by far the shortest account of all four and never narrates an actual resurrection appearance of Jesus (Mark 16:1-8). Matthew, Luke and John can then be seen as imaginative expansions of what was originally a very brief and enigmatic narrative about some women's Easter morning confusion.
- c. Even if someone wants to take everything in the Gospels at face value, the different writers simply contradict each other too often to be believable. Mark speaks of a young man who greeted the women at the tomb, Luke of two men Matthew of an angel, and John of two angels. Marks and Matthews Jesus appears only in Galilee, Lukes only in Jerusalem. No two gospels lists of the women who went to the tomb are the same, nor do they agree on whether it was still dark or already after dawn.”¹⁵

With time, many scholars answered these skeptical arguments. In general, the answers were the following: the presupposed gnostic myth does not predate the writing of the gospels, and other alleged parallels are not that close or numerous, so the gospels may have influenced their language and appearance. The answer to Mark's abrupt ending is that he writes to Christians in Rome under persecution who probably came to faith and had earlier knowledge about the

¹⁴ Craig L. Blomberg, *The historical reliability of the Gospels*, 136.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 137.

resurrection already. Thus, emphasizing fear of God at the end of his gospel, his intention is to encourage the community living in fear and uncertainty. Among many proposals for the contradictions were made by solutions that try to harmonize the differences and build the sequence of the resurrection events.

The most common objections that are related to the nature of the resurrection are grouped into four categories by Blomberg:¹⁶

1. Jesus' resurrection is reduced to faith or memory in followers' hearts, which did not die with the crucifixion. Moreover, it raises faith after his death.
2. Various spiritual resurrection hypotheses.
3. Objective resurrection occurred, but it was linked to the faith of those who already believed in Jesus. To state it differently, He appeared to those who already believed in him.
4. Jesus rose bodily from the grave in a way that everybody present could have seen, but this perception is debated because it is not described in comprehensive detail.

After responding to the objections, Blomberg presents arguments for evidence of the resurrection.

1. „In a context where female witnesses were routinely considered less reliable than male witnesses and where it was uncommon for female witnesses to be admitted into a court of law, no person or organization would ever fabricate stories about female first witnesses who were entrusted with telling the male disciples what they had seen and heard, including giving them directions on where to meet Jesus.
2. The second argument concerns the method of execution since it was by crucifixion. In Deut. 21:23 we read that anyone hanged on a tree was cursed by God. Therefore, a Messiah (candidate) could hardly have died by crucifixion. Only a bodily resurrection can explain this discrepancy.

¹⁶ Craig L. Blomberg, *The historical reliability of the Gospels*, 142-147.

3. When liberation movements have entrusted various leaders with the task of carrying out the liberation, they have always ensured succession. Whether it came from the family or whether a member of the movement took over, the new Messiah was assured. We are not aware, however, of any of the Christians replacing Jesus as the new Messiah. Something must have happened, however, which may explain the establishment and rapid growth of the church immediately after Jesus' death.
4. Believers started celebrating worship on Sunday instead of Saturday. The shift of celebration from Sabbath to Sunday can be seen as a joint decision of Jews and Gentiles, who did not have a designated feast day in the week. We read in several epistles that they gathered on Sunday. Only the resurrection can explain why Paul declares the Sabbath among the ceremonies that were a shadow of the things to come (Col 2:17).
5. At the dawn of Christianity, believers did not respect any tomb in which the body of Jesus lay, contrary to the custom that teachers and leaders were honored in the places where they were buried.”¹⁷

In the abovementioned paragraphs, we have seen the arguments for evidence for the reliability of the resurrection, according to Blomberg. We have to consider the fact that in order to best explain the differences between the two gospels in light of the discussions about historical reliability, the resurrection accounts show different reliability criteria than the historical narratives. The resurrection appearances reflect the experiences of the disciples that cannot be verified by historical methods.

In the present investigation's second chapter, I will analyze the connection between the two Gospels. In the third chapter, an examination and comparison of the resurrection narratives will follow and in the fourth chapter the possible explanations and their evaluation will result the best explanation for the differences between the accounts.

¹⁷ Craig L. Blomberg, *The historical reliability of the New Testament*, 700-715.

Chapter 2.

The connection between the gospels of John and Mark

There is a significant debate in biblical studies on the composition of the Gospel of John. The prevailing consensus among scholars is that the earliest gospel was the Gospel of Mark and the latest, the Gospel of John. This chapter examines the connection between the gospels of Mark and John.

The traditional viewpoint was that John knew Mark, and he used the gospel to write his own. Starting from the middle of the twentieth century, this viewpoint was questioned. George R. Beasley-Murray writes in his introduction to the commentary on John: „Everything we want to know about this book is uncertain, and everything about it that is apparently knowable is matter of dispute. The Gospel is anonymous; argument about its traditional ascription to the apostle John has almost exhausted itself. We cannot be sure where it was written or when. We are uncertain of its antecedents, its sources, and its relationships.”¹⁸

This statement shows a picture of the last two centuries of scholarly discussion investigating the text with historical-critical methods. First of all, it should be noted that there are obvious differences between the first three Gospels and the fourth. The first three Gospels are strikingly similar, but the differences are notable when we come to the fourth Gospel. John's gospel has proved so different over time that even its historical credibility has been questioned.¹⁹ Therefore, we have to investigate the connection between the two gospels. First, I will give an overview of the history of research. Second, I will discuss issues related to the background of the gospels, such as authorship, date, location, and audience. Third, I will compare passages overlapping the two gospels to get a general overview of how John uses Mark.

2.1 History of Research

According to the traditional view, John, the apostle, wrote the gospel based on his own memories. He must have known the Gospel of Mark and probably Matthew and Luke, too.

¹⁸ Beasley-Murray and R. George, *John*. World Biblical Commentary (Waco, Texas: Word Books Publisher, 1987), xxxii.

¹⁹ Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 17.

Church fathers believed the Fourth Evangelist supplemented the Synoptics, creating a spiritual gospel. The Muratorian Canon makes claims regarding the relation of the gospels, acknowledging the differences between them, but it does not view these differences as problematic for the believer because the Spirit directed the writing of all four Gospels.

Many scholars before the turn of the 20th century would have held opinions that were probably the closest to Clement's that John was written to provide a "spiritual" interpretation as opposed to the "bodily" accounts found in the other Gospels, though the language would have more likely contrasted "historical" with "theological." Based on Clement's typology, it was supposed that John was familiar with the Gospels, especially with Mark.²⁰

In 1938, P. Gardner Smith's work *Saint John and the Synoptics* challenged the earlier consensus, stating that the author of the fourth Gospel could hardly have depended on the Synoptic gospels. Furthermore, John might have used independent sources of information. This voice was made louder by many other scholars. C. H. Dodd, in his investigation of the historicity of the gospels (*Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel*)²¹, concluded that there should have been an ancient independent tradition behind the gospel that is independent of the other known traditions. Most commentaries written after that time, for example, by R. Bultmann, R. E. Brown, R. Schnackenburg, L. Morris, J. N. Sanders, and B. A. Mastin, reflect the conviction of John's independence of the Synoptics.²²

In the twentieth century, some scholars noted similarities between John and the Synoptics, such as Edwin Hoskyns in Britain and C. K. Barrett in Germany. Barrett states in his commentary that "Mark and John agree closely together, as occasionally they do, and there is no simpler or better hypothesis than that John drew his material from Mark, not in slavish imitation, but with frequent recollections which a well-known and authoritative source would inspire. John used freely what Marcan material suited his purpose... Similar remarks may be made with regard to the synoptic sayings."²³

²⁰Marianne Meye Thompson, *John: A Commentary* (New Testament Library, Westminster: John Knox Press, 2015), 4.

²¹C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: University Press, 1963).

²²Beasley-Murray and R. George, *John*, xli-liv.

²³Charles Kingsley Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John, Second Edition: An Introduction With Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1978), 15-6.

F. Neiryck claims that the Fourth Evangelist derived from the Synoptic Gospels, not from the traditions behind them.²⁴ Neiryck points out that while these observations alone are significant for determining John's use of the Synoptics, they do not go far enough in supporting the effort of commentators eager to argue for John's use and knowledge of the Synoptics who "abundantly" set out the parallels between John and the Synoptic gospels. Other Louvain school members followed the position that John knew and used Mark.²⁵ German Scholars who also argued for John's use of the Synoptic gospels are Udo Schnelle, Jörg Frey, Michael Laban, and Manfred Lang.²⁶

The exploration of intertextuality in the gospels resulted in a renewal of the position that John knew and used Mark. Hartwig Thyen, celebrating a paradigm shift, defended John's dependence on Mark and the Synoptics, arguing that John used them as pretexts and reworked them throughout his gospel. Jean Zumstein and Thyen argue that the Fourth Evangelist is engaged in a process of "relecture" of other gospels, specifically Mark, possibly Luke, though not Matthew. This 'rereading' does not involve the kind of literary redaction represented by Matthew and Luke's use of Mark, exemplifying what Gérard Genette labeled 'hypertextuality.' Thyen and Zumstein offer a more nuanced version of the position of scholars who argued for Johannine dependence on Mark.²⁷

Among scholars who state that John wrote his Gospel independently from Mark, but they shared common sources, we can mention Robert Fortna, who continued and developed Rudolf Bultmann's theory about the "Signs Gospel." According to this theory, John and Mark are connected because of a series of miraculous accounts included in the two numbered signs (Jn 2:11 and 4,54). Bultmann argued that the passion narrative was a separate unit from the "Signs Gospel," while Fortna and others stated that this "Gospel" contained a passion account. Anton Dauer stated that John used Markan motifs from the oral tradition.

²⁴ Frans Neiryck, "John and the Synoptics," in *L'Évangile de Jean: Sources, Rédaction, Théologie*, ed. Marinus de Jonge (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1977), 106.

²⁵ For instance, Adalbert Deneaux and Maurits Sabbe.

²⁶ Udo Schnelle, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, ThHK Band 4 (Leipzig, Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2016).

²⁷ Harold Attridge, "John and Mark in the History of Research," in *John's Transformation of Mark*, ed. Becker, Eve-Marie; Helen K. Bond; Catrin H. Williams (London: T&T Clark Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021), 14.

Manfred Lang, in his work entitled *Johannes und die Synoptiker*,²⁸ shows through a comparison of the passion and resurrection narratives that John might have used the Synoptics supplemented with other traditions.²⁹

Some scholars claim that common oral tradition explains the connection/relationship between the two gospels. For example, Michael Theobald finds that some sayings in Mark are useful “metatexts”³⁰ to the sayings in John, generally appealing to shared oral traditions to explain parallels.³¹

Another explanation for the similarities between the gospels of John and Mark is the so-called “secondary orality.” According to this concept, in Christian communities, written copies of the Synoptics were read aloud and used as the model for homilies. One of the representatives, for example, Ian D. Mackay, in his analysis of the relationship between John 6 and Mark 6-8, points out the complexity of John's dependence on Mark. One strand of evidence shows that John reflects on Mark in a free and practical way, while another line of evidence points to close textual interaction. Mackay agrees with John Ashton, who “correctly states (1993:81), and with majority support, the differences between the two gospels are so great that no simple literary theory can account for them.”³²

Paul Anderson describes the relationship between John and Mark as “interfluent” rather than “influential” in only one direction.³³ In his view, the “Bi-optic” relationship between John and Mark is defined by two parallel viewpoints on Jesus' ministry reflected in the gospels, which may have been involved in dialogue as they were forming in the oral and written stages. “John and Mark, then, reflect parallel-and-yet-distinctive traditions that were engaged with each other along the way. They are the Bi-Optic Gospels, and whereas Luke and Matthew built on Mark, the Fourth Evangelist built around it.”³⁴

²⁸ Manfred Lang, *Johannes und die Synoptiker: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Analyse von Joh 18-20 vor dem markinischen und lukanischen Hintergrund* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck et Ruprecht, 1999).

²⁹ Harold Attridge, “John and Mark in the History of Research,” 18.

³⁰ Michael Theobald defines the term in his essay about the Johannine Dominical Sayings as a Johannine (oral) unit that stands in relation to a pretext, where pretext means a fixed, stable saying tradition (see Michael Theobald, „Johannine Dominical Sayings as Metatexts of Synoptic Sayings of Jesus: Reflections on a New Category within Reception History,” in *John, Jesus, and history, Volume 3, Glimpses of Jesus through the Johannine lens*, ed. Paul N. Anderson, Felix Just, Tom Thatcher (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 387.

³¹ Harold Attridge, “John and Mark in the History of Research,” 19.

³² Ian D. Mackay, *John's Relationship with Mark* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 302.

³³ Paul N. Anderson, “John and Mark: The Bi-Optic Gospels” in *Jesus in Johannine Tradition*, ed. Robert Fortna and Tom Thatcher (Louisville: Westminster: John Knox Press, 2001), 181.

³⁴ Anderson, “John and Mark,” 185-6.

From the history of research, I have learned that until the '30s, the traditional view stated that John was dependent on Mark, which means that John used Mark to write his own gospel. Few scholars questioned this perspective and stated that John was independent of Mark, which, in my view, means that John did not use Mark. Later, starting in the middle of the twentieth century, further investigations were made, and Barrett, among the first scholars, claimed that John had drawn his material from Mark. Further studies have found that John knew and used Mark. Moreover, there were results that have shown a complex connection, such as influence and mutual connections between the traditions.

To gain a clearer view, we have to analyze the questions related to the origins and formation of the gospels, such as authorship, date, and audience, in order to have a broader perspective and understanding of the connections that stand in the background of the gospels. If we see the historical background of the situation when the gospels were written and who the authors were, we can better determine the relationship between Mark and John.

2.2 The authorship of the gospels of John and Mark

The identity of Mark

The majority of scholars agree that the earliest written gospel is the gospel “according” to Mark.

Mark's name is not mentioned in the Gospel, nor is there any indication of who might have written the second Gospel. The Gospel was inscribed at the beginning of the second century to distinguish it from other Gospels. Who was Mark, and to whom was the second Gospel attributed?

In his introduction, Eugene Boring addresses the authorship question after discussing the second gospel's narrative, structure, genre, sources, date, and provenance. According to him, it is preferable to see the author as a Christian teacher who writes as a community member rather than as a charismatic figure.³⁵

Papias, the bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor, is known to have made the earliest mention of the authorship of the Second Gospel. Eusebius preserved his testimony in *Historia Ecclesiastica*. According to this record, Mark was Peter's interpreter, who accurately wrote all that he remembered from Peter's teachings, but not in the order the Lord did or said (*Hist. Eccl.*

³⁵ Eugene M. Boring, *Mark: A Commentary* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 20-1.

6.14.6-7). This claim suggests that Papias wants to answer a question related to the chronological order and structure of the gospel.

The lack of internal evidence in the Second Gospel may raise doubt regarding Mark's person. However, second and third-century Christian writers, such as Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen, and Clement of Alexandria, attest that Mark wrote the Second Gospel and depended on Peter.³⁶

Who was Mark, and where can we read about him in the New Testament?

It appears that the Mark in question is John Mark, the son of Mary, who owned the house where the early church members gathered to pray in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12). The Last Supper took place in the same house (Acts 1:13–14; Mark 14:14). He went on the first missionary tour with Barnabas and Saul (Acts 12:25; 13:4).

He halted his travels at Perga for unknown reasons (Acts 13:13). In about the year 50 A.D., Paul and Barnabas disagreed over whether Mark should join the second missionary journey. Paul felt that Mark's abandonment of the first journey was unjustified and refused to accompany him on a second journey, so he took Silas and left for Asia Minor, while Barnabas went back to Cyprus with Mark (Acts 15:37–41). After ten years, John Mark reappears in sporadic allusions, showing that he has made peace with Paul (Col 4:10; Phlm 24; 2 Tim 4:11).

In the last mention in the New Testament (1Pet 5:13), he is seen working with Peter in Rome. As to the patristic tradition, Mark preached in Egypt, founded austere and rigorously philosophical churches, and went on to become the first bishop of Alexandria (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 2.16).

There are doubts about Mark's authorship, such as the error in the knowledge of Palestinian geography and Jewish customs, but one can identify two characteristics that suit John Mark as the author of the second gospel. The first is the simple Greek style of the language full of Semitism that is normal for a Jerusalem-bred Christian. The second is Mark's connection with Paul, which can explain the Pauline theological influence. Carson and Moo correctly conclude that „nothing in the second gospel stands in the way of accepting the earliest tradition that identifies John Mark as its author.”³⁷

³⁶ D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2005), 173.

³⁷ Carson and Moo, *An Introduction*, 175.

Date, place, and audience

Researchers have suggested several dates between 40 and 75 for writing Mark's Gospel. According to Carson and Moo, the gospel was written sometime in the late 50s and 60s. The majority of scholars date the gospel from the middle to the late 60s. There are more reasons sustaining this time interval. Among the internal evidence, we can find that the gospel should have been written shortly after the beginning of the persecution of the Christians, which took place after 65, because everything points to the cross. According to the evidence suggested by Mark 13, it has to be dated between 67 and 69 since it is supposed to depict the circumstances in Palestine at the time of the Jewish uprising and immediately before the Roman invasion of the city.

Eugene Boring states that more scholars date Mark between 65 and 75. The main point of contention is whether Mark 13 depicts the destruction of Jerusalem as having already happened.³⁸ The dilemma is whether the account itself implies that these events have already occurred, even though all of them are still in the future and were prophesied by Jesus.

Jesus' prophecy of Jerusalem is different from what happened in the city in 70. Therefore, what is written in Mark 13 won't help to date since Jesus paints a very different picture of the destruction compared to that which occurred in Jerusalem. Instead of focusing on the particulars of the Jerusalem siege, Jesus' prophecies are based on common Old Testament and Jewish imagery about city sieges.³⁹

According to the church tradition, Mark wrote the Gospel in Rome for Gentile Christians.⁴⁰ Based on the following arguments, Eugen Boring questioned this traditional statement in his commentary.⁴¹

The important terms from Pauline theology—such as "law" and "righteousness of God"—are absent from Mark, but the overall Christological perspective of the Gospel differs from Paul's, who never explained his Christology in terms of stories about Jesus' earthly ministry but rather concentrated entirely on his death and resurrection.

³⁸ Boring, *Mark*, 14-5.

³⁹ Carson and Moo, *An Introduction*, 182.

⁴⁰ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 23-4.

⁴¹ Boring, *Mark*, 17-9.

Not even the earliest Christian writings from Rome reflect Mark's Gospel. Towards the end of the first century, both 1 Peter and 1 Clement emanated from Rome. None of them indicates an affinity with Mark, and neither included nor reflected the gospel kind of narrative Christology. Boring concludes that although it's unlikely that Mark was written in Rome, it's still unclear where exactly Mark was written.⁴²

Among the arguments in favor of Roman provenance, the numerous references to suffering seem strong if the gospel was written in the shadow of the persecution of the Roman church in the middle 60s. We cannot analyze the influence of Peter and Paul on Mark here, but some scholars see a connection between Peter's preachings, recorded by Luke, and the structure of Mark's account.⁴³ We have to mention here that the theme of suffering shows affinity with the first letter of Peter and the gospel of Mark.

While other places, such as Egypt (Alexandria), Syria (Antioch), Galilee, and Ephesus, were considered possible locations, we have to conclude that we cannot prove that the gospel was written in Rome. However, according to the abovementioned arguments, in light of tradition, we can tell that Rome remains the most probable place to write the gospel.

If this is the most probable place, then, according to tradition, the audience might have been a gentile Christian community in Rome. This can be evidenced by the Aramaic translations and Jewish custom explanations to the audience, for example, the importance of washing hands before eating (Mark 7:3-4).⁴⁴

The identity of John

Like the Synoptics, the Gospel of John does not explicitly assert the author's name. However, the title *According to John* was attached when the canonical gospels began to circulate. Partially, the role of this addition was to distinguish it from the other gospels.

According to the traditional view (church tradition), the Gospel of John was written by John, the apostle, and there is a newer approach that there was another John in Ephesus who is called the elder or presbyter and who could also have been the Beloved Disciple. In the gospel's

⁴² Boring, *Mark*, 19.

⁴³ Carson and Moo, *An Introduction*, 176-7.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 182.

last chapter, the concluding verses refer to the writer as an unnamed disciple identified as the Beloved disciple. In order to analyze this, we will look at the text of Papias as we can read from Eusebius:

“If, then, any one came, who had been a follower of the elders, I questioned him in regard to the words of the elders — what Andrew or what Peter said, or what was said by Philip, or by Thomas, or by James, or by John, or by Matthew, or by any other of the disciples of the Lord, and what things Aristion and the presbyter John, the disciples of the Lord, say. For I did not think that what was to be gotten from the books would profit me as much as what came from the living and abiding voice.”

(Eusebius, Hist. Eccl. 3.39.4).⁴⁵

First, we can see that John’s name appears twice. Many scholars argue that Papias repeats the name because, together with Aristion, they were alive when the text was written. Richard Bauckham argues that there is a clear distinction between the two persons, which is made clear by the “elder” adjective. Scholars also state that other apostles in the New Testament later called themselves elders at an older age (1 Peter 5:1).

Secondly, it looks like Papias gives a list of disciples almost identical to the order found in the Gospel of John. He should have been familiar with the gospel or its sources, but here, it doesn’t point to the gospel’s author. Eusebius writes in his Church history that there were two men named John who were respected and remembered in Ephesus, and presumably, one of them returned from Patmos.⁴⁶

Finally, this fragment lets us conclude that Papias doesn’t mention anything about the authorship of the Fourth Gospel. Even if discussing two different persons called John here is possible, this text doesn’t give us strong evidence about the gospel’s author.

Edward W. Klink seems to state correctly that Bauckham’s conclusion that John the Elder was the author of the Gospel is not supported by external and internal evidence. Based on tradition and internal evidence, there is strong evidence that the beloved disciple could be the author of the Gospel. “While not impossible, neither the external evidence itself nor the internal evidence allow such a conclusion. Just as the author waits until the epilogue to connect the Beloved Disciple (see 21:23-24), he also waits until the epilogue to declare his identity as the

⁴⁵ Eusebius, H. E., 3.39.4., <https://topostext.org/work/732>

⁴⁶ Ibid., 3.39.5-6., <https://topostext.org/work/732>

Beloved Disciple to one of the sons of Zebedee (see 21:2), thereby making clear that John the son of Zebedee, the apostle John, is the author of the Fourth Gospel.”⁴⁷

The relationship of the beloved disciple and author (evangelist?) of the Fourth Gospel is also debated. We have to analyze the internal evidence because we can recognize the author to be mentioned in the last chapter: “This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true” (John 21:24). Some scholars think that this statement refers only to the last chapter.⁴⁸ It is evident from this chapter that “this disciple” is the beloved disciple, the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper. This disciple appears throughout the whole gospel in other chapters, too. The name John appears in the Gospel in the context of baptism, and he is John the Baptist. We can also read about two unnamed disciples in the gospel.

The Beloved Disciple appears for the first time, namely in 13:23, then in 19:35 as an eyewitness of the crucifixion, and on Easter morning, he seems to be the first disciple who believes in the resurrection (20:2,8). In Chapter 21, the beloved disciple appears together with Peter, and the discussion with Jesus results in a rumor that he won't die until Jesus returns, but this is a misunderstanding of Jesus' words, who answers with the question: “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?” (John 21:22). In the last chapter the sons of Zebedee are also mentioned for the first time in (verse 2) with two unnamed disciples who make the question more complicated, but we also meet two unnamed disciples at the beginning of the gospel, one of whom remains anonymous. I think it is much more plausible to connect the Beloved Disciple's character with one of the unnamed disciples appearing both at the beginning of the Gospel and in the last chapter.

Another question is the change to the first-person plural in John 21. The first-person plural form of the verb οἴδαμεν in 21,24, translated as “we,” taken from the context about the author, can serve here as a self-reference to the author having an editorial function.

Among other possible meanings (associative and dissociative), Richard Bauckham mentions that the plural pronoun “we” is also “used as a substitute for ‘I’ when the intention is not to refer to any other persons along with the speaker but to give added force to the self-

⁴⁷ Edward W. Klink, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. John (4)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2016), 47.

⁴⁸ Robert W. Funk, Ulrich Busse, Ernst Haenchen ed., *John 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of John, Chapters 7-21* (Hermeneia, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1988), 222.

reference. This is sometimes called a plural of majesty or a plural of authority. It may be used by an author, much like the authorial ‘we’ in English, presumably to add a sense of augmented authority...”⁴⁹

According to the other meanings mentioned by Bauckham, we can presuppose the presence of a group or a school behind the author of the Fourth Gospel that could have edited or finished the author's work. Apart from the Johannine epistles and the Book of Revelation, there are weak connections to historical evidence that such a school existed, as there are surviving records or references to other schools in Ephesus. Rob van Houwelingen claims in his commentary that it is strange that neither the founder's identity nor authority is mentioned in the Johannine writings, and from the second and third centuries, not even a trace of a specific Johannine school survived.⁵⁰

When we read John 14:30-31 looks like Jesus comes to an end of the farewell discourses: “I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me, but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me. “Come now; let us leave. (NIV John 14:30-31)

In chapter 15, the farewell discourses are continued without any introductory claims, and Jesus talks about himself as the true vine and his Father as the gardener. Again, in John 20, we can read in the first verse that Mary alone visits the tomb, and in the second verse, she talks in the name of others when she says with the plural form of the verb to know, “we don’t know where they have put him” (NIV John 20:1-2).

In my view, these signs are evidence for redactions therefore, the final composition of the gospel was made by a redactor. In the following paragraphs, we will investigate the possible place and date of origin of the Fourth Gospel.

Date, place, and audience

We will now examine the possible place, date, and audience associated with the author of the fourth Gospel.

⁴⁹ Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses. The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*, Kindle. Chapter 14. The “we” of Authoritative Testimony.

⁵⁰ P. H. R. van Houwelingen, *Johannes: Het evangelie van het Woord*, Commentaar op het Nieuwe Testament, (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1997), 29.

Among the possible places of origin are Alexandria, Antioch, Palestine, and Ephesus. The tradition points to Ephesus as the most probable place. There are also other less probable locations. The first chapter of John and the concept of logos show affinity with Philo, and because he is connected to Alexandria, this may be one of the other locations where the gospel originated. Because of other presupposed similarities and connections with the Odes of Solomon and Ignatius, who was bishop in Antioch, some think this city could also have been a possible place to write the gospel.

Carson and Moo state that regardless of where it was originally published, John's gospel might have been in circulation in Phrygia for fifty years after it was written. It is important to recognize that the Church Fathers—whether correctly or incorrectly—only supported Ephesus as the place where the Fourth Gospel was composed.⁵¹

According to church tradition, John wrote his gospel near the end of the first century for churches around Ephesus in western Asia Minor. However, a minority of the church fathers and the tradition claimed that James, together with John, was martyred and died at an early age. The last chapter of the Gospel suggests that John may have lived a longer life than the other disciples. This chapter raises the question of whether one of the disciples had not passed away already, and this is why the author includes it in the epilogue. If we take into consideration the claims of the majority church father's view on John and the possible crucifixion of Peter in Rome, this time span can be between 60 and 100.

Arguments in favor of a pre-70s dating point to the absence of any reference to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple and the present tense formulation of 5:2 as referring to the present situation in Jerusalem at the time when the gospel was written. In the latter case, the author seems to use the historical present to narrate the past events. Even if it is an isolated case for the verb “to be,” it is more important to suggest a desire for healing at the temple in Jerusalem in that present situation.

Blomberg affirms that the Lake of Bethesda was in use in Roman times after the 70s and was connected with the cult of Asclepius. Thus, the Sheep gate in John 5:2 “may have been still standing or has been rebuilt.”⁵²

⁵¹ Carson and Moo, *An Introduction*, 254.

⁵² Craig L. Blomberg, *Historical reliability of the New Testament*, 160-3.

John refers to the worship of God and the temple as the place of worship after the clearing of the Jerusalem temple in chapter four when Jesus replies to the Samaritan woman: “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.” (John 4,21.23).

In the first half of the gospel (chapters 1-12), there are several references to the temple, which indicate that the presence of Jesus and worship in Spirit are more important than the physical location of the temple at that time. In the second half of the gospel (chapters 13-21), the focus is on Jesus rather than on the temple. Andreas Köstenberger claims that “the silence regarding the temple in John 13-21 is a rhetorical device pointing to Jesus as its permanent replacement.”⁵³ I think he concludes well that “the destruction of the Second Temple in A.D. 70 provides an important recent historical datum that likely impacted the composition of the Fourth Gospel, and that reading the Gospel in light of this then-recent event makes excellent sense, especially of the Gospels treatment of the temple and related Jewish festival symbolism as fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah.”⁵⁴

The gospel may have been written between 70 and 95 in Ephesus, even though this time span can be longer because the gospel does not mention time and place at all, and even if modern scholars challenge the Ephesian origin, preferring Alexandria instead of it.⁵⁵ Among the different possible places of the origin of the gospel, scholars find different groups to whom the gospel may have been written with different aims and purposes. According to the different places, possible audiences can be, for instance, Jews from Alexandria, believers under persecution, Israelites in diaspora, the congregation established by John in Asia-Minor, or was written as an apologetic document for groups in conflict with heretics.

Edward W. Klink III, in his commentary, presupposes that the Johannine community construct is methodologically an inadequate framework for understanding the Gospel. To summarise briefly, he mentions three arguments in support of the explanation. The gospel audience has to be characterized first and foremost "relationally," not geographically. The

⁵³ Andreas Köstenberger, “The Destruction of the Second Temple and the Composition of the Fourth Gospel” in *Challenging Perspectives on the Gospel of John*, ed. John Lierman, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 96.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁵⁵ Klink, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. John*, 59-61.

readers of the Gospel are not limited to any one place or period; rather, it is intended for a broad audience.

Secondly, a "mirror reading" of the Gospel mistreats the genre and presumes a very limited audience that is not familiar with this type of literature, making it impossible to rebuild the audience for the Gospel. Third, the Gospel does not lend itself to being read by or meant for a confined group of people. On the other hand, the intended reader of the Gospel is still uncertain due to its manner of writing. It is more reasonable to presume that the Gospel was written with a large readership in mind and was meant to support the early Christian community's overall witness.⁵⁶

These thoughts are more plausible because we cannot be sure of historical evidence of a connection to a Johannine community, but we have seen that it is the work of a redactor who might be the Beloved Disciple.

2.3 Differences and similarities between the gospels of John and Mark

Having looked at the background of the gospels, we now turn to the specific differences and similarities. The similarities show a connection, and the differences show an independent way of John's use of Mark. Differences can be seen together with similarities. There is no evident border, and it cannot be sharply divided.

Genre

Beginning with Charles Tarbert's suggestion in 1977, the Gospels genre was classified as a form of Greek-Roman biography. Michael R. Licona and other researchers discovered many similarities between the characteristics of the Gospels and those of the Greek-Roman biographies. In his work, *Why are there differences in the gospels?* he compares ancient biographies with the Gospels, trying to find answers to why these discrepancies exist. Thus, by examining the differences in the Gospels, he concludes that the genre of biography also explains the differences and gaps in the Gospels, even if the tensions cannot be fully resolved.⁵⁷

Licona writes in his Introduction: „For our purposes, we only need to recognize that the New Testament gospels bear a strong affinity to Greco-Roman. Accordingly, we should not be surprised when the evangelists employ compositional devices similar to those used by ancient

⁵⁶ Ibid., 64-5.

⁵⁷ Michael R. Licona, *Why are there differences in the Gospels: What can we learn from ancient biography?* (Oxford: University Press, 2017), 3-5.

biographers. In fact, we should be surprised if they did not.”⁵⁸Regarding Plutarch's methods, he lists the following eight compositional devices: transferal, displacement, conflation, compression, spotlighting, simplification, expansion of narrative details, and paraphrasing.⁵⁹

Most academics agree that John often modified and reworked his sources to fit his style. When comparing the Synoptics with John, Licona finds that the evangelists used compositional devices to write their own accounts.

Licona investigates nineteen pericopes that appear throughout the canonical gospels on two or more occasions. He limited himself to the pericopes he thinks contain differences resulting from the same type of compositional devices described in the compositional textbooks and inferred from the pericopes he examined in Plutarch's *Lives*.⁶⁰

In the Gospel of John, we can find the following common features with Mark: the ministry of John the Baptist (1:19-34), the cleansing of the temple (2:13-22), (in John at the beginning of Jesus' ministry), the feeding of the five thousand (6:1-13), the passage at sea (6:16-21), Jesus' anointing (12:1-8), his coming and entrance to Jerusalem (12:12-19), the external setting of the Last Supper (13) and the Passion.

Important distinctive features in the gospel of John are the following: we find seven miraculous signs of Jesus' deeds of increasing intensity, and, except for the first two, with a long dialogue. The time frame of John's Gospel is almost three times as long as that of the Synoptics, with three Passover feasts, while the Synoptics have only one in which Jesus is crucified.

Before we begin the investigation, we presuppose the following thoughts.

The similarities show that John has drawn on sources, and Mark is likely to have been one of his sources since the differences suggest other sources. The fact that other sources were available is also recorded in Luke 1 and John 21:25. The differences also suggest that John reflected theologically on Mark or its sources because John presupposed that his audience already knew information from the first gospel or its sources.

The similarities suggest that there might be a structural connection with the gospel of Mark: there are no nativity narrations, and with the cleaning of the temple brought forward and

⁵⁸ Licona, *Why are there differences in the Gospels?* 5.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 115-8.

the extended farewell discourses, John gives the impression that the gospel can also be seen as an extended passion narrative.

In the following paragraphs, we will examine some of the differences between the Gospels of Mark and John.

The first difference is seen in the pericope about John the Baptist in Mark 1:2-11 and John 1:19-34. Despite the Synoptics making it evident that John the Baptist baptized Jesus, John 1:29-34 does not claim He was baptized. It could very well be that John's account assumes Jesus's baptism and temptation had already taken place and that John the Baptist is recalling what had occurred at his baptism. Licona summarizes and states that we can see the simplification as a compositional device here. „John 1:29-34 either assumes his audience is already aware of an event and leaves it unstated, or he intentionally does not mention it (simplification).”⁶¹

Another difference between the two gospels is Mark 6:31-56 and John 6:1-25 (Feeding the Five Thousand, Walking on Water, and Healings at Gennesaret).

According to Mark 6:34, Jesus taught the people, while in John 6:2, they came to him after he had healed a few of them. In John, Jesus asked Philip where they would buy bread for the crowd before they arrived, but in the Synoptics, the question of feeding the crowd does not come up until the end of the day after Jesus taught the people. The oldest tradition or memory of the event may not have been clear about when the problem of feeding the crowd emerged, and the evangelists may have incorporated it into their stories using their literary and artistic skills. It is possible to argue that the problem emerged in both instances, that John concentrated on the former while the Synoptics reported the latter, and that on this occasion, John compressed the narrative and left out Jesus instructing the multitude.

In the Gospel of Mark, we read about "The twelve baskets had leftover "pieces and fish," but in John, the leftovers are "pieces from the five barley loaves." Jesus commanded his followers to board a boat and follow him "to the other side, to Bethsaida" in Mark 6:45. The disciples boarded a boat and set out to cross the sea "to Capernaum," according to John 6:16-17. While John 6:21 states that they arrived where they wanted, in Capernaum, which bordered the Genezareth region, Mark 6:53 states that they landed at Gennesaret. In this case, Licona names

⁶¹ Ibid., 126.

the compositional devices as the evangelist's slight paraphrasing, compression, or artistically weaved elements into the narratives.⁶²

In his dissertation, *John's Relationship with Mark*, Ian Mackay carefully mentions that the dependence of John 6 on Mark 6-8 is exceedingly complex.⁶³ On the one hand, he highlights evidence that points to John as a free and practical reflection on Mark; on the other hand, he shows other evidence that suggests tight textual contact. He also concludes, for instance, that John 6:1–15 echoes the feedings and the Last Supper, which is helpful to John's program, but leaves out others (there is no proof that Mark was used verbatim).⁶⁴

Mackay's hypothesis, which accounts for the exact nature of the dependence, shows this twofold relationship between John and Mark. He presupposes: "If Mark's gospel had taken root in the evangelist's imagination and memory, notwithstanding the fact that the evangelist intended to continue to work on and *expand the community's own independent story* with its particular perspective and thrust, the puzzling combination of exactitude and freedom would be adequately explained."⁶⁵

Finally, Mackay concludes: "Thus Mark's teaching-feeding crossing-recognition themes, always in the background, are echoed here and there in precise parallel language; but with abundant reversal, often exact, for John has needed not only to reverse Mark's positive-negative role modeling but also, and more importantly, to collapse Mark's powerful temptation-exorcism network into *his own distinctive Christology*. To serve his own agenda and theology, John has systematically stood Mark's most effective strategies on their head."⁶⁶

Mackay also suggests, referring to John's "own distinctive" and "own independent story," that despite the similarities, the differences point to John's independence.

Paul Anderson sees this hypothesis as a derivation that is not a plausible inference.⁶⁷ Instead, he suggests his own Bi-Optic model to define the relationship between Mark and John. According to him, there is an ample indication that the tradition of John evolved separately from Mark, coexisting with him but without depending on him. Because Mark and John provide

⁶² Ibid., 138-9.

⁶³ Mackay, *John's Relationship with Mark*, 290-1.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 293.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 302.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 303.

⁶⁷ Paul N. Anderson, "John's Relationship with Mark: An Analysis of John 6 in the Light of Mark 6 and 8 – By Ian D. Mackay," in *Religious Studies Review*, 33, No. 3, (November, 2007): 239, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-0922.2007.00203_40.x

comparable but separate impressions of Jesus from the beginning, evolving in unique and individualized ways, they are deserving of the name "Bi-Optic Gospels."⁶⁸

The Passion narrative in Mark and John

The Last Supper

Michael Licona mentions that this pericope contains a number of discrepancies when comparing the Last Supper accounts in John and Mark.⁶⁹ The account of Jesus washing his disciples' feet is found only in John. The only place Jesus quotes Psalm 41:9 is in John 13:18. Jesus stated, "Truly I tell you that one of you eating with me will betray me," in Mark 14:18. The disciples questioned Jesus one after another in Mark 14:19–20, asking, "It is not me, is it? John tells the story in a slightly different way. Jesus informs his followers that one of them would betray him, and they glance at each other to figure out who it may be. Beside Jesus, in a reclined position, was the Beloved disciple. Peter encouraged the disciple to ask Jesus, "Who is it?" with a tip of his head. "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread after I have dipped it," said Jesus in response. After dipping it, he handed it to Judas and commanded him to act swiftly on what he was about to accomplish. According to John, nobody at the table understood why Jesus had told Judas this. This implies that Jesus could have stated what he said regarding dipping just to the Beloved Disciple. Judas took the bread and walked out right away.

The day Jesus is supposed to have had his last dinner with his followers differs the most. The Synoptics indicate that the Last Supper was a Passover dinner, typically eaten on the first day of Unleavened Bread. Nonetheless, John's Gospel contains a number of details that suggest he discovered the Last Supper one day ahead of the Synoptics.

Furthermore, if we were to read John's gospel without having any prior knowledge of the Synoptics, we would conclude that John reports that Jesus was killed before the Passover supper was celebrated.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Paul N. Anderson, *The riddles of the fourth gospel: An introduction to John*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 126.

⁶⁹ Licona, *Why are there differences in the Gospels?* 152.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 151-6.

The crucifixion and death of Jesus

A huge difference in this pericope pertains to the time at which Jesus was crucified. Mark 15:25 says it was the third hour (9:00 am). However, in John 19,14, Jesus was still on trial before Pilate at the sixth hour (noon). The Synoptics appear to narrate Jesus being crucified after the Passover meal, while John speaks of a Passover meal to be eaten on the day of Jesus's crucifixion. Thus, there are discrepancies pertaining to both the time and day of Jesus's crucifixion. In the following paragraphs, we will look at possible explanations for the differences.

Some have proposed that John follows the time used by the Romans for their civil day while the Synoptics follow a different timetable, in which the workday begins at 6 am. Others suggest that the Passover was often celebrated on different days since there were disputes over the proper day on which the Passover fell or because of different times at which days started and ended for Galilean and Jerusalem Jews. Still, others suggest that any meal during the week of Passover could be referred to as a Passover meal and that the discrepancy in time could result from John rounding up and Mark rounding down. Some scholars believe that John changed the day and hour of Jesus's crucifixion to highlight certain theological ideas, most notably that Jesus is the Passover Lamb and the burned offering for sins. According to this interpretation, John has moved the date and hour of Jesus's crucifixion. It's possible that Plutarch used a comparable chronological shift while discussing Julius Caesar.

Mark records the penultimate words said by Jesus on the crucifixion as, "My God!" My God! Why have you forsaken me? However, it seems like John says, "I'm thirsty" instead. According to Mark, after making his last declaration from the cross, Jesus let forth a loud cry and passed away. According to John, Jesus declared, "It is finished," and he passed away. Almost all specialists on John's Gospel agree that the evangelist frequently redacted existing traditions around Jesus. These two statements by Jesus could be examples of how much John had already changed the customs.⁷¹

Helen Bond sketches another view, comparing the characters. According to her, there are many similarities between Mark 14–15 and John 18–19, including the order of events, details,

⁷¹ Licona, *Why are there differences in the Gospels?* 166.

themes, and even terminology.⁷² It was suggested that content with this great degree of similarity had to originate from a common (presumably written) source, most likely an early continuous passion narrative that served as the model for both Mark and, subsequently, John.

Additionally, she claims that Mark provides a very theological, internally coherent, and persuasive account of his principal character's (Jesus) death.

For those with eyes to see, Jesus' sad death truly represents the king's victory in the world of drastically new values that the work generates. The passion narrative in John's Gospel follows Mark's account in terms of chronology the closest, but a number of notable differences give his story a distinctive tone. Rather, the triumphant tone, which is unquestionably present in Mark but is suppressed, now takes center stage. For John, Jesus' death represents the hour of his exaltation, the fulfillment of his earthly purpose, and the world's judgment. The Logos comes to this world to be rejected; he will be the new paschal lamb who takes away the world's sins.

In the courtroom sequences, John diverges from Mark quite a little. He lengthened the Roman trial five times its Markan duration and minimized the Jewish inquiry to the barest minimum. Though there are inconsistencies between the two stories at this stage, John's meticulous reworking results in numerous themes becoming far more developed. The reduction of the numerous to the single is a common Johannine method, where the single slap gives the tale more drama than its Markan counterpart. John significantly lowered Jewish hearing. John's Jewish hearing is brief, but it has three important components. 1. Jesus kept his teachings in synagogues private, saying nothing in contrast to the Markan concealment (Mk 1:44, 5:43, 8:30, 9:9). 2. It's crucial to know who Jesus was questioning – Annas, the High Priest. While Mark frequently includes many characters, John prefers to focus on only one, emphasizing each character's unique experience with Jesus. In contrast to the High Priest, whose servant reacts violently to Jesus and is himself subdued by Jesus, he is brave and possesses immense majesty. 3. The recounting of John maintains the difference between Jesus and Peter, much as the Markan account.

John develops the darkness/light theme that runs throughout this gospel, and there are hints of this as well. John's Peter is bathed in the smoky glow of a charcoal fire, warming

⁷² Helen K. Bond, "The triumph of the king: John's transformation of Mark's account of the Passion," in *John's Transformation of Mark*, ed. Becker, Eve-Marie; Helen K. Bond; Catrin H. Williams (London: T&T Clark Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021), 251-67.

himself by it, albeit he does not walk away from it. There is undoubtedly some importance to his denial of the one who is indeed the light of the world.

John takes a moment to describe the trial's location and the time it all took place before moving on to his last scenario. This is a purposeful divergence from Mark, who places Jesus's death on the actual Passover the next day. Helen Bond thinks that it is more likely that the evangelist relied on customs that were already well-liked within his own Christ-following groups, customs that had already started to correlate Jesus' death with the Passover lamb, rather than John altering Mark for theological reasons.⁷³

According to Helen Bond, one way to reconcile the two traditions is to propose that John and the Synoptics used separate dates, as she suggests among her reasons for the differences; nevertheless, it appears more likely that the disparity is due to a distinct dating system between Palestine and the Diaspora. In spite of these reconciliations, she offers an alternative explanation: both the Johannine and Markan traditions narratively portray Jesus' death as having great significance; ultimately, both are predicated not on historical memories but rather on a shared theological and symbolic elaboration of the memory that Jesus died “around Passover.”⁷⁴

At the beginning of her essay, Helen Bond claims that the Markan and the Johannine traditions agree that Jesus was crucified on Friday and buried that afternoon. “What is disputed is whether that Friday was the Passover itself, Nisan 15 (so Mark), or the day of Preparation, Nisan 14 (so John).”⁷⁵

In Mark 14:1.12, we read that “Passover (πάσχα) and the Festival of Unleavened Bread were only two days away. On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover (πάσχα) lamb, Jesus’ disciples asked him, “Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?” In John 18:28, we read the following: “Then the Jewish leaders took Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now, it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness, they did not enter the palace because they wanted to be able to eat the Passover (πάσχα).” According to John, this was the day Jesus was crucified. John 19:14 states that: “It was the day of Preparation of the

⁷³ Helen K. Bond, “The triumph of the king,” 265.

⁷⁴ Helen K. Bond, “Dating the Death of Jesus: Memory and the Religious Imagination,” in *New Testament Studies* 59, No. 4 (September 2013): 461-475, DOI: 10.1017/S0028688513000131

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 461, DOI: 10.1017/S0028688513000131

Passover (παρασκευὴ τοῦ πάσχα); it was about noon. ‘Here is your king,’ Pilate said to the Jews.” How can we understand this Friday?

This day starts at sundown, and the Greek term παρασκευή, “Preparation Day,” meaning Friday, is generally the preparation day for the Sabbath or a Feast. The question still remains: why does John refer in 13:2 (καὶ δείπνου) eating the meal and 18:28 (πάσχα) eating the Passover?

Craig Bloomberg states in light of Lev 15:5-11 that the defilement that occurred during the daytime could expire until dinner and would not have influenced the celebration. Therefore, in 18:28, it is much more likely that John is writing about the “lunchtime meal known as the ‘hagigah,’ celebrated during midday after the first evening of Passover.” This explanation is not in contradiction with the fact that on Friday, the preparation day for Sabbath (παρασκευή), Pilate presented Jesus to the Jews as their king at noon.⁷⁶

Bloomberg's explanation tries to harmonize exceedingly because John 18:28 explicitly states, "it was early morning and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness; the Jews did not enter the palace; they wanted to be able to eat the Passover (φάγωσιν τὸ πάσχα)." (NIV John 18:28)

The resurrection narratives

In the following paragraphs, I will discuss the differences between the resurrection narratives in John and Mark to give a general overview.

The word "grave" (μνημεῖον) in Mark 16:2 and John 20:1 refers to a memorial tomb or a monument. There are differences in the times the women arrived at Jesus's tomb. In John 20:1, it is early, when it is still dark, yet in Mark 16:2, it is after the sun has risen. It's likely that the women set out for the tomb when it was still dark (John) and arrived after the sun had risen (Mark). The goal of the author, like Plutarch's, was not to recount events with photographic accuracy.⁷⁷

There were differences in how many women visited the grave. Although Mary Magdalene is the only person mentioned in John's account, it would be incorrect to assume she was alone. Instead, John describes Mary Magdalene as having gone to the tomb and then, in a

⁷⁶ Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, 224.

⁷⁷ Licona, *Why are there differences in the Gospels?* 169-71.

panic, going to Peter and John. John may have started her story in the limelight because he wanted to include another interaction between Jesus and this woman.⁷⁸

Mark mentions just one angel in the grave, not two. Mark tells the story of a woman who saw just one angel, the speaking one and failed to disclose the second angel's presence. The qualities of spontaneous narration must always be considered while reading the gospels, particularly in the resurrection accounts, where the heightened emotional states of those directly engaged increase the likelihood of more vivid and narrowly focused narratives.

The evangelists used different sources for their reports. Every evangelist uses a different storytelling technique. As a result, each chooses options that align with his methodology, stressing certain elements while disregarding others.⁷⁹

Where Jesus initially appeared to a group of his male followers is where the resurrection accounts diverge. John places the location of his appearance in Jerusalem, whereas Mark places it in Galilee. According to some academics, Jesus made his initial appearance in Jerusalem, and the order to travel to Galilee was intended to prepare the people for his ultimate arrival—possibly after the Festival of Unleavened Bread concluded and the pilgrims from Galilee returned home. But Mark doesn't make this clear. For what reason does Mark place John's initial appearance in Jerusalem and Mark's to the male disciples in Galilee? It is difficult to ascertain. It's possible that John favored the source of the appearance in Jerusalem, whereas Mark chose or was only aware of sources that placed the appearance in Galilee.

This might conflict with the fact that John the Disciple is the author of the fourth gospel. However, we must keep in mind that the gospels are not the first works of literature to record Jesus' resurrection. Paul spoke about Jesus' appearance to others and his resurrection before the first Gospel was published. Scholars generally agree that Paul incorporated an oral tradition, the content of which dates considerably older, into 1 Corinthians 15:3–7. According to this oral tradition, Jesus was crucified, buried, resurrected, and appeared six times after his resurrection to others – some of whom Paul knew personally.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Jakob van Bruggen, *Christ on Earth*, trans. Nancy Forest-Flier (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 269.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 269.

⁸⁰ Licona, *Why are there differences in the gospels?* 170.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that John worked individually. The similarities and the presence of compositional devices (simplification, paraphrasing, summarizing) suggest that John knew Mark or the oral/written tradition behind it. We may conclude that he knew how to collect and compose all the sources to transform them into the best account so that he could give his audience the fullest and most complete masterpiece about Jesus.

The differences point to the independence of the gospel, which means that John selected carefully, making his own independent choices of what to include from Mark or the oral/written tradition behind the gospel to his own work. Although the gospel of John does not appear to need any other knowledge from other documents to understand its text, he might have given a theological interpretation to the events possibly known from his sources, too. As we can read, “Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written” (John 21,24). John witnesses Jesus' words and works in his own independent way.

As we can see, the chapter contributes to the overall picture of the relationship between the Gospels of John and Mark, helping to understand the complex connection between the origins of the gospels and the development of the resurrection faith, giving a clearer view of the process.

Chapter 3

Exegetical approach to the resurrection narrative according to Mark 16:1-8

The structure of Mark 16:1-8 shows the following pattern: the sequence of the events and scenes lets us divide this pericope into two parts: on the way to the tomb and at the tomb.

However, if we get closer and focus on the scenes, according to the motions in the narrative and the forms of the verb ἔρχομαι (to go, come) the pericope has three parts: the women go to the tomb, enter the open tomb, and run away from the grave.

<p>Mark 16:1 Καὶ διαγενομένου τοῦ σαββάτου Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ Μαρία ἡ [τοῦ] Ἰακώβου καὶ Σαλώμη ἠγόρασαν ἀρώματα ἵνα ἐλθοῦσαι ἀλείψωσιν αὐτόν.</p> <p>Mark 16:2 καὶ λίαν πρωὶ τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων ἔρχονται ἐπὶ τὸ μνημεῖον ἀνατείλαντος τοῦ ἡλίου.</p> <p>Mark 16:3 καὶ ἔλεγον πρὸς ἑαυτάς· τίς ἀποκυλίσει ἡμῖν τὸν λίθον ἐκ τῆς θύρας τοῦ μνημείου;</p> <p>Mark 16:4 καὶ ἀναβλέψασαι θεωροῦσιν ὅτι ἀποκεκύλισται ὁ λίθος· ἦν γὰρ μέγας σφόδρα.</p>	<p>And when the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices that they might come and anoint him.</p> <p>And very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb.</p> <p>And they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"</p> <p>And when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away.</p>
<p>Mark 16:5 Καὶ εἰσελθοῦσαι εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον εἶδον νεανίσκον καθήμενον ἐν τοῖς δεξιοῖς περιβεβλημένον στολὴν λευκὴν, καὶ ἐξεθαμβήθησαν.</p> <p>Mark 16:6 ὁ δὲ λέγει αὐταῖς· μὴ ἐκθαμβεῖσθε· Ἰησοῦν ζητεῖτε τὸν Ναζαρηνὸν τὸν ἐσταυρωμένον· ἠγέρθη, οὐκ ἔστιν ὧδε· ἴδε ὁ τόπος ὅπου ἔθηκαν αὐτόν.</p> <p>Mark 16:7 ἀλλὰ ὑπάγετε εἶπατε τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ Πέτρῳ ὅτι προάγει ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν· ἐκεῖ αὐτὸν ὄψεσθε, καθὼς εἶπεν ὑμῖν.</p>	<p>As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.</p> <p>"Don't be amazed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.</p> <p>But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'</p>

Mark 16:8 καὶ ἐξεληθοῦσαι ἔφυγον ἀπὸ τοῦ μνημείου, εἶχεν γὰρ αὐτὰς τρόμος καὶ ἔκστασις· καὶ οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν εἶπαν· ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ.

Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

As we have stated with the arguments of the majority of scholars who agree that Mark was the earliest gospel, we can also emphasize the historical significance of his being the first to write about the empty tomb, a pivotal event in the resurrection narrative.

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul writes about the men to whom Jesus appeared for the first time after his resurrection (Peter, James, five hundred). Here, Mark writes about the women at the empty tomb, and in the first eight verses of Mark, there is no appearance of Jesus. As we have decided to analyze verses 1-8, we will do so with the following reason(s):

The earliest known manuscripts contain only the first eight verses of chapter 16. For example, we can't find the Longer Ending (verses 9-20) in codex \aleph and B, Not only in the early Greek manuscripts but also in the earliest translations (into Syriac and Latin – codex Bobbiensis), the text ends at Mark 8. Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, and Jerome claim that they were unaware of the longer ending, which seems to strengthen the fact that Mark only had a shorter ending in the second century. According to Codex Bobbiensis, verse 8 continues (lacking six words from the shorter ending), with a brief (in thirty-four words) account of how the woman shared the message with their followers and how Jesus “sent out by them to all the world the holy and immortal proclamation of eternal salvation.”⁸¹ In later codices, most of the manuscripts contain the longer ending of Mark (dated from the second century).

Related to the structure of 16:1-8 we have to mention that according to James Edwards, Mark uses a “sandwich technique” in 15:40 and 16:8 where between the two pericopes about the women (at the cross and at the tomb) Mark interlocks the courageous action of Joseph of Arimathea to contrast the women's fears at the tomb.⁸²

⁸¹R. T. France: *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 2002), 685.

⁸²James Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 484.

3.1 The women on their way to the tomb

Mark connects the resurrection account to the passion narrative by mentioning the women's names so that the women who appear at the tomb are the same ones present at the cross (15:40), although Salome is not among those who observed where Jesus was laid.

The women's action refers to Jesus' anointing at Bethany, so they would have known that Jesus had foretold that this was the anointing for his burial, but they did not remember.

Mark does not seem to be trying to remind the reader of 14:3–9, where quite different terminology is employed. If, as 15:41 implies, they were with Jesus on the road to Jerusalem and heard his prophecies about his passion, then the very fact that they considered anointing at all indicates that they had simply not taken seriously his expectation of rising again after three days.

The material for the anointing of Jesus' body in Mark are spices, aromatic oils, or salve (ἀρώματα). The verb “ἀλείφω” suggests that the material to anoint was a liquid material, similar to 14:3-9. The time when the women approach the tomb is very early in the morning. Mark, in verse 2, first writes λίαν πρωῒ "very early in the morning" and ends with ἀνατείλαντος τοῦ ἡλίου "when the sun had risen." The very early morning may refer to the last part of the night when the sun had not yet risen. In this sense, it seems to contradict what Mark writes in the second section of the verse: when the sun had risen. It is possible that the text has deteriorated.

Very early can refer to the time between 3:00 and 6:00 AM, but it is qualified by just after sunrise. Mark notes that the sunrise perhaps ensures that the woman has not mistaken the tomb, but this does not explain why Mark also stated, “early in the morning.”

Craig Evans gives the following explanation:

“If corrected, the concluding genitive absolute of v 2 (ἀνατείλαντος τοῦ ἡλίου, “the sun having risen”) would then be taken with the beginning of v 3, which would then read: “When the sun had risen, they were saying to themselves.” Perhaps this is the source of the misunderstanding, but the problem is in the Greek. It may be assumed that the text is in some way corrupt, so the translation “before the sun had risen” has been adopted here.”⁸³

In my opinion, the third verse could not begin with the ending of the second verse because it begins with the typical Markian narrative form: καὶ (historical present). Furthermore,

⁸³ Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20* (WBC, 34B, Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 534.

if we use the broader meaning of the adverb “πρωῖ,” which can also mean early in the day or morning, there seems to be no more contradiction in the second verse.

The stone

Alone, Mark records: “Who would roll the stone away?” Strangely, the women were already on their way to the tomb to anoint the body, but they did not consider that a stone was rolled to the tomb's entrance (Mark 15:46-47). R.T. France mentions in his commentary that the scene is almost humorous because the women prepared everything carefully but did not think about this elementary obstacle. But why does Mark introduce this question here? It seems that the men were hiding, which increased the women's concern. Left on their own, they looked for solutions, for someone to help them roll away the stone.

Boring gives the following answer:

“The women have no expectation of finding the stone rolled away and the tomb empty and that such a stone, large as it is, will not finally seal Jesus in the tomb. Nor is it merely a reminder that the men disciples, presumably capable of handling the stone, have disappeared. The statement does not contrast absent men and present women or strong men and weak women but functions on another level, standing in the same series as 1:10, in which God’s hand splits the heavens, and 15:38, in which God’s hand splits the temple curtain. The resurrection will be the divine finale of removing barriers that separate God and the world.”⁸⁴

According to Joel Marcus, this rhetorical question could have been part of a lamentation that explains why the women did not think of a solution earlier. He writes: “The women’s utterance may be more a lament than a real question...in which the note of lament is explicit. Interpreting the women’s question in this way helps address the difficulty of why they did not think of the problem before.”⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Boring, *Mark*, 443-4.

⁸⁵ Joel Marcus, *Mark 8-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, (Yale University Press, 2009), 1079-80

The women at the tomb

In verse four, Mark answers the question of why the women were worried about the rolling of the stone: because the stone was very big (ἦν γὰρ μέγας σφόδρα). Here, Mark does not explain how what happened. Thus, the narrative starts taking on a transcendental level with the stone's mysterious movement.

As they were walking and struggling with the obstacles once, the woman just looked up and saw that the stone had been rolled away. The verb “to look up” or “see” (ἀναβλέπω) has a symbolic meaning because Mark does not mention that the tomb was on higher ground. Commentators point out the connection that anticipates Jesus’s miracles, to which this scene is intertextually connected. For example, the verb is reminiscent of feeding the five thousand and the healing miracles (6:41, 7:34, and 8:24), in which Jesus looked up into the sky before doing the miracles. Thus, the word foreshadows the reveal of divine power through Jesus.⁸⁶

3.2 The women in the tomb

In the next verse (5), Mark relates that the women entered the tomb and saw a young man, but the verb here is expressed by the word ὁράω. The fact that the women saw a man in white clothes in the tomb can be a reference to a heavenly being, and the women's reaction indicates that there is more than just a physical, earthly encounter. In the light of Mark 14:33, as we can imagine the scene, we can say that the women's state of mind suggests a sense of fear and tremble. The fear of the women, expressed by Mark with the word ἐκθαμβέω, is the same as we read at the arrest of Jesus, indicating that this is very normal and serious in a similar situation and is not a hallucination.

Mark describes the young man (νεανίσκος) inside the grave as an angelic person who authoritatively interprets the situation as a divine messenger (ἄγγελος) sitting (κάθημαι) like a teacher on the right side of the grave. The young man wears a shining white (λευκός) robe. This image can be associated with other heavenly beings from deuterocanonical writings, such as 2 Macc. 3:26 33; 5:2, and apocalyptic literature like Dan. 7–12; Rev. 1:1; 19:9–22:16. Therefore,

⁸⁶ Boring, *Mark*, 444. and Joel Marcus, *Mark: 8-16*, 1084.

angels can be represented as young men, and the scene is very similar to the angelophanies we meet in the Scriptures (Genesis 21:17, Matt 1:20, Luke 1:13). In comparison with other gospels The question is given why Mark calls this person a young man while the other gospels present an angel (Matt 28:2 - ἄγγελος) or angels, too. (Luke 24:23 - ἀγγέλων and John 20:12 - δύο ἀγγέλους).

In my opinion, and according to the statement that Mark was the first to write the gospel, it was early to formulate this revelation for his audience. It seems like Mark wants to describe the form of an angel with immanent terms and words as a witness for the resurrection, just like in the book of Revelation, where the witnesses are dressed in white robes and sitting on the throne (Rev. 3:5.21; 6:11).

France mentions that Mark probably is narrating in a similar way as Luke does when he uses human language to describe the appearance of an angel using both words ἄνδρες and ἀγγέλων (Lk. 24:4 and 23; Acts 1:10 and 10:30).⁸⁷

According to Boring, Mark does not want to separate the person of Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, from the risen Lord. Therefore, he was reluctant to write about Jesus's post-resurrection appearances because he did not want to open the possibility of the revelations of the risen Lord mediated by an angel.⁸⁸

The fact that the messenger wants to point to the continuity that Jesus from Nazareth is the one who has risen is evident from the next verse when we hear him saying: “you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen.”

Before these words, we read that the women's reaction to what they have seen was that they were amazed and distressed (ἐκθαμβέω). The angelic figure points directly to this state of mind of the women and wants to melt away their fear when he starts speaking: do not be amazed! (μὴ ἐκθαμβεῖσθε·).

In his short utterance, the young man invites the women to check the place to be sure that Jesus is not there, even though they saw earlier his burial place (Mark 15:47). After every sentence until now started with the conjunction “καὶ,” the sixth verse is introduced by the construction of “ὁ δὲ” (“but, then”), which seems to be a reversal in the text, so I think it is

⁸⁷ France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 614.

⁸⁸ Boring, *Mark*, 445.

important to highlight what the young man is saying here. The key phrase to this passage, I believe, is to be found in this message: The crucified Jesus from Nazareth is the one who you are looking for, and he is the one who has risen.

I think this idea is not negligible, as R.T. France claims, “There seems to be no special significance in his use of the title ὁ Ναζαρηνός; as in 10:47 it simply identifies the Jesus who is referred to.” But then he acknowledges the importance of the effect of mentioning Jesus’ place of origin, which “is to confirm the continuity from the Jesus of the ministry (who at the outset was introduced as ἀπὸ Ναζαρέτ, 1:9) to the Jesus of the resurrection.”⁸⁹

As the women are seeking the body to anoint, they hear the explanation about the missing body, but it is difficult for them to understand its meaning: “He was raised; He is not here; behold (look), *here is* the place where they laid Him.” (ἠγέρθη, οὐκ ἔστιν ὧδε· ἴδε ὁ τόπος ὅπου ἔθηκαν αὐτόν.) When Jesus predicted this event, he used the words ἀνίστημι (Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:34) and ἐγείρω (Mk 14:28) to express his resurrection. In my opinion, the messenger’s words are comforting in this situation, but the women cannot accept this situation at that moment because of their grief and, therefore, cannot immediately understand it.

The use of τόπος points to a certain geographical location, which, in my understanding, clearly refers to the place where Jesus was buried. The grave is evidence that he was buried there, even if the tomb was empty. Additional support for this explanation comes from R. Edwards, who states that although the empty tomb does not prove Jesus’ resurrection, this gives it significance. “The empty tomb testifies that the Jesus who died as a bodily being was raised as a bodily being, and it is the historical place and point in time that marks the transition between his two orders of existence.”⁹⁰

When Jesus and the disciples ate the Passover dinner and went out to the Mount of Olive Trees, Jesus predicted the coming events and promised that after being raised, he would go in front of them to Galilee (14:28). This promise is repeated in verse 7: ὅτι προάγει ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν· ἐκεῖ αὐτό. The message is addressed to the women who must go and tell Jesus’ disciples, from whom Peter is mentioned by name alone. Jesus is the leading one who is going (προάγω) in front of them. Mark mentions that Jesus was on the road from the beginning of the gospel (ἰδοὺ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου, ὃς κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδόν σου

⁸⁹ France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 680.

⁹⁰ James R. Edwards: *The Gospel According to Mark*, 494.

Mk 1,2-3), and his way pointed to the cross in Jerusalem, but the young man says that he is already on his way to Galilee. Jesus conducted them, and now he leads continuously, showing the direction forward. Mentioning Peter after his denial suggests it is time for a new start. The young man sends the disciples back to Galilee, where everything has started. The women are encouraged that what they searched they did wrong, but they can meet the one who they searched if they remember his words and follow his instructions.

The role of Galilee in this verse as a place of reconciliation and forgiveness is stated by Boring.⁹¹ He explains in more detail that the mention of the disciples and Peter has a dual role. In particular, the fact that the disciples flee and Peter denies Jesus on another level expresses how Mark's readers can understand from this that the disciples who have fled persecution and denied Christ have the possibility of reconciliation, forgiveness, and a new beginning. The task in this situation is the same as the women's: to take the good news to the others. "The messenger points ahead to "Galilee," of the Christian mission of the readers' own time, but does not narrate this; there is no narrative of reunion in Galilee, receiving the Spirit, and continuation of the church. In terms of narrative, the story folds back on itself, and readers who are willing to have the gospel continued in their own lives are directed back to the *arche* of the gospel itself, in Galilee (1:1), which can now be reread in ever-new perspective."⁹²

3.3 The women leaving the tomb

Because of the limitations and the aim of this writing, we cannot discuss the debates about the longer and shorter endings of the gospel. As stated above, this study focuses on Mark 16:1-8, so we will consider verse 8 as the ending. Thus, we can say that the gospel ends abruptly with the eighth verse. As strange as it is to end a sentence with the conjunction "for" γάρ, the way the chapter ends is also strange in its content. The women quickly exited the tomb and ran away in fear, telling no one anything of what the young man had said.

The women were first amazed (distressed) and then turned to fear, which seems natural in such an extraordinary meeting. The two expressions of consternation (τρόμος and ἔκστασις) that describe their state of mind indicate the increase in fear.

⁹¹ Boring, Mark, 447-448.

⁹² Ibid., 448.

They go through from distress (ἐκθαμβέω) to trembling (τρόμος), astonishment, and terror (ἔκστασις) because of an unusual, extraordinary event.

This would be the last image of the scene with a double negation, that they won't say anything to anybody, and finally, the sense of fear. Honestly speaking, this is not what a reader expects after a great start of Jesus' way through the cross, but yet with the hope that, in the end, everything will turn into a triumphant meeting moment.

In my view, this is similar to a symphony that starts with a very pleasant harmonious chord, for example, C major, and ends with a disharmonious chord. The audience listens carefully to the music from the beginning, and the orchestra sounds similar. There are pleasant, harmonious, and disharmonious sounds and parts in the piece when the audience is dazzled and approaching the end, everybody knows what will follow, but the music suddenly ends with a disharmonious chord that is unpleasant for the audience, for example, a diminished seventh chord, for example, Bdim7 and the audience when hearing no more music they start singing the first chord (in this example a C major) to lift the last chord played by the musicians and give a harmonious resolution to the dissonant end of the piece.

E. Boring formulates this thought more sophisticated when he gives a metaphor to relate this contrast: "The story that began with the trumpet call announcement of the dawning of God's kingdom ends not with a bang but a whimper, trailing off in midsentence."⁹³ According to Boring, in the narrator-reader relationship, the reader's decision can respond to the strange ending because the reader, as a faithful disciple, was with Jesus until the end, even when the disciples fled.

In my view, the harmony is that the reader is taken everywhere through the narrative where the disciples and Jesus went, and they are let to see all the details together with them. The disharmony occurs at the end when there is the impression that no one remains in the final scene to fulfill the young man's message. Finally, the harmonious resolution to the dissonance could be that the reader sings the last chord, which is the first one, in continuance and decides to fulfill the command of the messenger.

⁹³ Boring, *Mark*, 449.

Exegetical approach to the resurrection narrative in the gospel of John: the overlap

In the following paragraphs, I will examine the overlap between Mark and John, as the previous chart has shown. These verses are 1-2, 12, and 17.

The empty tomb and the risen Christ are experienced by followers. Early in the morning or shortly after the sabbath, Mary Magdalene and others visit the tomb near Jerusalem (Mark 16:1-2 and John 20:1-2). At one point, they see a young man (angelic figure) or angels (Mark 16:5 and John 20:12). Mary or the women are sent with a message (Mark 16:7 and John 20:17). From these compared verses, it is evident that the overlap is in chapter 20.

The resurrection account in chapter 20 is described in two parts: in the morning (1–18) and in the evening (19–29). As we have seen in the gospel of Mark, if we look closer, here too, every section can be divided once more: the finding of the empty tomb (1–10) and Jesus' apparition to Mary (11–18); Jesus' appearance to the disciples (19–23), and Thomas (24–29). The ending conclusion consists of verses 30-31.

In the next paragraphs, we will examine the verses that overlap in the gospel of Mark and John.

Comparison of Mark 16:1 and John 20:1-2

Mark 16:1-2	John 20:1-2	Translation of John 20:1-2
Καὶ διαγενομένου τοῦ σαββάτου Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ Μαρία ἡ [τοῦ] Ἰακώβου καὶ Σαλώμη ἠγόρασαν ἀρώματα ἵνα ἐλθοῦσαι ἀλείψωσιν αὐτόν.	Τῇ δὲ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ ἔρχεται πρὸ σκοτίας ἔτι οὔσης εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον καὶ βλέπει τὸν λίθον ἠρμένον ἐκ τοῦ μνημείου.	Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.

καὶ λίαν πρωὶ τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων ἔρχονται ἐπὶ τὸ μνημεῖον ἀνατείλαντος τοῦ ἡλίου.	τρέχει οὖν καὶ ἔρχεται πρὸς Σίμωνα Πέτρον καὶ πρὸς τὸν ἄλλον μαθητὴν ὃν ἐφίλει ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· ἦσαν τὸν κύριον ἐκ τοῦ μνημείου καὶ οὐκ οἶδαμεν ποῦ ἔθηκαν αὐτόν.	So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"
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The difference we can see is in the time of day they arrive at the tomb and the number of women arriving there. Mark uses (διαγενομένου τοῦ σαββάτου) and John (Τῇ δὲ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων), and they both agree that the resurrection was on the first day of the week after the Sabbath was over. The difference consists in how the time is described. According to Mark, the sun had risen, but John states that it was still dark (πρωὶ σκοτίας). Verse two in John's account suggests that Mary was not only alone because the verb to know is in plural: “we do not know” (καὶ οὐκ οἶδαμεν), but all the other verbs are in third person singular (ἔρχεται, βλέπει, τρέχει, λέγει).

The accounts in Mark and John diverge regarding whether or not an angel was present at the tomb on the women's initial visit. When the women arrived at the empty tomb, Mark reported the presence of one angelic figure who immediately instructed them about where they could find Jesus. However, in John's narrative, Mary simply finds the tomb empty and returns having no idea where Jesus is or that he has risen from the dead. This implies that no angels were there until Mary's second visit.

Besley and Murray state in their commentary that it is difficult to answer whether Mary was alone at the tomb because the plural here can reflect an “Oriental mode of speech whereby plural can be used for singular.” In their explanation, it seems logical that even if there were more women, Mary had to leave before the messenger appeared because she had a totally different message to Peter than the angelic figure told to the women in the gospel of Mark. Therefore, it is hardly believable that the plural used in the second verse means that at that time, when it was still dark together with Mary, there were other women, too.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Besley-Murray, *John* (WBC), 370.

In my view, John's technique is very common when he transforms Mark in other passages. Instead of a group of people, John highlights one person with the reason to adapt to his own audience.

According to Helen Bond, John prefers to focus on one figure and personality, while Mark has several characters in the center when they meet Jesus. John frequently employs the reduction of the multiple to the single; for instance, Jesus's boldness and majesty are in contrast with the High Priests, and his transparency before the High Priest contrasts with Peter's denial. While Mark used his parallel trials to explore themes of responsibility, John's single trial draws attention to cosmic themes of power and judgment.⁹⁵

Brown claims that at least three accounts may lay behind the resurrection narrative in John 20.⁹⁶ This categorization shows the following pattern: verses 1-2 and 11-13 describe the women's visit to the tomb; verses 3-10 and 14-18 describe the visit of a group of male and female disciples, in which verses 14–18 describe Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene. He thinks that that verses 1-2 and 11–13 are two distinct versions of the same account.⁹⁷

A detailed analysis is given by Brown in his commentary on the three basic narratives in John. According to him, some of Jesus' female followers went to the tomb on the first day of the week, found it open, and returned with the disturbing news that the body was missing. Later, when Jesus appeared explained the empty tomb, so this issue was not part of the first preaching. Jesus' explanation for the empty tomb was transformed into a narrative and, through the interpolation of an angelic interpreter, was linked in a subsequent development to the story of the women's visit to the tomb. Perhaps John could preserve the account of the women's visit to the tomb found in 20:1-2 and 11-13. Why is this separation? Two hypotheses explain the separation. One is that verses 1-2 are part of a very early account, in which Mary appears to be individualized for dramatic effects due to an editorial reduction. According to the second version verses 11-13 are fragments of a later narrative changed by the editor to introduce the angels. According to the second hypothesis, verses 1-2 and 11-13 formed the women's visit at the tomb narrative. and verse 2 was the connection for introducing the male disciples' account at the tomb.

⁹⁵ Helen K. Bond, "The Triumph of the King: John's Transformation of Mark's Account of the Passion," in *John's Transformation of Mark*, ed. Eve-Marie Becker, Helen K. Bond, Carin H. Williams, (London: T&T Clark, 2021), 260-263.

⁹⁶ Brown, *John*, 998-1004.

⁹⁷ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 368-369, and Brown, *John*, 999.

The plural form of the verb in verse 2 complicates the issue, making it difficult to connect with verse 11 as one divided story. Therefore, it is easier to explain it as a fragment of a different account that knew about more women's visits.⁹⁸

Comparison of Mark 16:5 and John 20:12

Mark 16:5	John 20:12	Translation of John 20:12
Καὶ εἰσελθοῦσαι εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον εἶδον νεανίσκον καθήμενον ἐν τοῖς δεξιοῖς περιβεβλημένον στολὴν λευκὴν, καὶ ἐξεθαμβήθησαν.	καὶ θεωρεῖ δύο ἀγγέλους ἐν λευκοῖς καθεζομένους, ἓνα πρὸς τῇ κεφαλῇ καὶ ἓνα πρὸς τοῖς ποσίν, ὅπου ἔκειτο τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ.	and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

In this passage, Mark uses the verb ὁράω and John the verb θεωρέω to express what the woman or Mary saw. According to Gingrich, θεωρέω means to see, look at, observe, perceive; view, catch sight of, notice, experience death,⁹⁹ and ὁράω bears the meaning of see, catch sight of, notice; visit, become visible, appear experience, witness, mentally and spiritually see, perceive, look at, take care, and be on guard.¹⁰⁰

In a similar scene, John transforms Mark using a synonym to express his thoughts. The difference is evident in the young man's identity and between the two angels mentioned by John. As we have seen, Mark's intention with the young man is not to open discussion about the post-easter appearances of Jesus. John spotlights the angels, referring to an earlier statement about the place of the clothes and linen in the tomb (one at the head and one at the feet), but also wants to strengthen and encourage the crying Mary with two witnesses as a sign of certainty. One can see the importance of two or more witnesses in Luke 10:1, 2 Cor. 13:1, Rev. 11:3.

According to Rob van Houwelingen, in the twelfth verse, the angels appear in “heavenly white” as a sharp contrast to the twilight darkness of the grave.¹⁰¹ Thus, the two angels' shining

⁹⁸ Brown, *John*, 998-1000.

⁹⁹ Felix Wilbur Gingrich, *Shorter lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1983), 90.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 140.

¹⁰¹ P. H. R. van Houwelingen, *Johannes*, 389-90.

white appearance is important because it emphasizes the contrast between the darkness of the tomb and the brightness of transcendence. This is in accordance with John's agenda of the dark and light motif, which is a characteristic of his gospel, starting from the first chapter.

In his commentary, Edward Klink writes that the mention of the place where the angels sit is even more important in this verse, as it evokes and intertextually connects this image with the image of the Ark of the Covenant, which had two angels at either end. The making of the Ark of the Covenant is found in Exodus 25:18-19, where the description recalls what Mary sees in the tomb. On the Day of Atonement, the ark's cover was associated with the place of sin offering. Therefore, the location served as the setting for God's authorized atonement of sins. The scenario in the tomb is identical to the one that takes place between the two cherubs on the Ark as the site of atonement. According to Edward Klink, the emphatic feature of the narrative permits such interpretation, which is supported by several conceptual and verbal arguments:

“1. First, there is a spatial relationship between the location of the ark and the body of Jesus. The ark was in the innermost chamber and separated by a veil; Jesus's body was placed in a burial chamber and separated by a rock and a veil like a face cloth (20:7). 2. Second, the occurrence of shared terms like ‘take/carry’ and ‘put/place/lay’ serve to create a conceptual relationship with the latter... 3. Third, both locations/objections involve the use of spices as an act of anointing or consecration ... 4. Fourth, just as the Jews, with respect to the sanctuary, were forbidden to ‘go in to look at the holy things, even for a minute, or they will die’ (Numei 4,20), both the beloved disciple and Mary Magdalene are hesitant to enter the tomb. In a related manner, just as there is the prohibition not to touch the holy things or they will die (Numei 4:15), so Mary Magdalene will shortly be commanded not to touch Jesus (v. 17).”¹⁰²

At this point, I would like to intervene and express my doubts about the quotation's last sentence because I cannot agree due to Jesus' later claim and invitation for Thomas to examine the place of the wounds on his hands (v. 27). I think the resurrection (as a new beginning, and new creation), means a new interpretation of the ark. However, we will examine whether the disciples touched Jesus or not in the next comparison.

¹⁰² Edward Klink, *John*, 842.

The objection and doubt mentioned above make it necessary to examine this scene more deeply. The fact that the analogy is taken from the apostolic fathers is suggested by Frederick Dale Bruner in his commentary.¹⁰³ The image becomes more complicated when Andreas Köstenberger details the form and size of the tomb. He wrote in his commentary that “the cave tomb, which probably was horizontal rather than vertical, was entered on ground level through a small doorway. This opening was usually no higher than a yard so that people had to bend down to crawl in (20:5).”¹⁰⁴ He gives further details about the horizontal and vertical forms of the grave when he comments on Lazarus's tomb. “The tomb was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. Though the shaft of the cave could have been vertical or horizontal, from the way Lazarus came out, as well as from archaeological evidence and Mishnaic regulations, it appears that the cave was horizontal. The burial place was outside the village so that the living would not contract ritual impurity from contact with the corpse. There is ample Jewish evidence for the use of natural cave for burial that were further prepared by artificial means. Jesus' own body would later be put in a similar tomb (Mark 15:46 pars.).”¹⁰⁵

In John, we read that Mary stood outside the tomb and bent over to look into it (v. 11). Köstenberger adds that “the reference to an angel at the head and the other at the feet probably pertains to an angel sitting at either end of the burial shelf.”¹⁰⁶ However, it might be unclear whether the angels were inside or outside the tomb due to the difference in the Gospel of Matthew. However, in our investigation, we must mention that Mark and John stated that the angels were inside the tomb.

In my opinion, the contrast between dark and light, death and life, and the invasion of God's power are the more emphasized elements in this verse because as the narrative goes further, I see a developing gradation between Mary's first visit at the tomb and the encounter with Jesus.

The fact that Jesus has gradually revealed himself to his followers is supported by the following chiasm presented by Michaels J. Ramsey in his commentary about John:¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 1151.

¹⁰⁴ Andreas Köstenberger, *John* (ECNT, Baker Academic, 2004), 561-2.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 342-3.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 567.

¹⁰⁷ Michaels J. Ramsey, *Gospel of John* (NICNT, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2010).

“**a**: Mary Magdalene looked at the tomb from the outside and saw that the stone had been moved (**v1**).

b: The beloved disciple looked inside the tomb and saw the linen wrappings (**v. 5**).

c: Peter entered the tomb and saw the linen wrappings and the headcloth arranged in a particular way (**vv. 6-7**)

b': 8, The beloved disciple entered the tomb, saw what Peter saw, and believed (**v. 8**).

a': Mary Magdalene looked inside the tomb, saw two angels, and finally saw the Lord himself (**vv.11-18**).”¹⁰⁸

Comparison of Mark 16:7 and John 20:17

Mark 16:7	John 20:17	Translation of John 20:17
ἀλλὰ ὑπάγετε εἶπατε τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ Πέτρῳ ὅτι προάγει ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν· ἐκεῖ αὐτὸν ὄψεσθε, καθὼς εἶπεν ὑμῖν.	λέγει αὐτῇ Ἰησοῦς· μὴ μου ἄπτου, οὐπω γὰρ ἀναβέβηκα πρὸς τὸν πατέρα· πορεύου δὲ πρὸς τοὺς ἀδελφούς μου καὶ εἶπε αὐτοῖς· ἀναβαίνω πρὸς τὸν πατέρα μου καὶ πατέρα ὑμῶν καὶ θεόν μου καὶ θεὸν ὑμῶν.	Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'

In comparison, Mark 16:7 and John 20:17 show that the common task is to go (ὑπάγω, πορεύω) and tell (λέγω) the message they received. Mark sends the women to the disciples (μαθηταῖς), and according to John, Jesus sends Mary to the brethren (ἀδελφούς). The messages are strikingly different in both gospels. Mark's message is that Jesus is going before them to Galilee, where they will see him as he told them. In John, the message of Jesus is that he ascends to his Father and their Father, and his God and their God.” We have seen the women's reaction in

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 340.

Mark. Now, we turn to John. As I stated above, the question is given: why could Mary not touch the resurrected Jesus, and why did Thomas later touch him?

In the following paragraphs, we will examine this question.

At first glance, it appears that Jesus does not yet allow Mary to touch his body during the conversation with her (v.11-18) but does so during the later encounter with Thomas (24-29). Between these two events, when the disciples were together without Thomas, Jesus appeared to them, offering/giving the Holy Spirit (19-23).

Edward Klink suggests that the abovementioned passage (19-23) between the two encounters (receiving the Holy Spirit) made it possible for Thomas to touch Jesus. He claims:

“...Jesus’s opening command does not prohibit Mary from touching him at that moment but guides her to see that her intense search for the location of his physical body had been misguided. What needs to stop is not a particular act of touching but a misplaced reliance on the physical presence of Jesus. The body of Jesus and his location needs to be redefined in light of his death, resurrection, and ascension, as well as the coming of the Spirit/Paraclete. This is why the touching of Jesus by Thomas is not in contradiction at all with this prohibition...”¹⁰⁹

In my view, the inclusion of the passage about the giving of the Holy Spirit (20:19-23) does not explain the difference between Mary's prohibition of touching and Thomas's invitation to see and touch Jesus. Thomas was not present when Jesus gave the Holy Spirit at the first meeting with the other disciples, and Thomas's eagerness to see Jesus' hands in the abovementioned context is also a “misplaced reliance on the physical presence of Jesus.”

We can see Jesus' argumentation for the prohibition of touching him after the conjunction “for” (γάρ): I have not yet ascended to the Father (ἀναβέβηκα πρὸς τὸν πατέρα·). The verb “to ascend,” ἀναβέβηκα, as the first person, singular form, is in the indicative perfect active tense. Translated as “not yet ascended,” it means that Jesus is preparing to go to the Father and soon will ascend, but this is not happening now. Many scholars recall the scene from Matthew 28:9-10 to give a better understanding and a broader view of this difficult verse, where the women encountering Jesus held him by the feet and worshipped him. Therefore, Mary must understand why she cannot touch or hold him back from the ascension when she has another task: to go and tell the brothers that Jesus ascends to the Father and God.

¹⁰⁹ Edward Klink, *John*, 847-8.

According to Rob van Houwelingen, we should not think that Jesus' ascension has already begun. The present tense of the verb "to ascend" (ἀναβαίνω) indicates that it will be realized soon. Jesus forbids Mary to cling to him as if He had returned forever. He is going to the Father's house. Mary must announce the imminent ascension to her brothers and sisters. Jesus did not seem to bring back the earthly past but to open the heavenly future.¹¹⁰

Van Houwelingen appeals to Matthew 28:9 when he explains what it means that Mary wanted to touch Jesus, pointing to the act of holding Jesus. Matthew uses the verb κρατέω to express Mary's action, which, according to Gingrich, has the following meanings: "take into one's possession or custody, apprehend, take hold of, grasp, seize, hold back, restrain."¹¹¹ John uses the verb ἅπτω to formulate Jesus' exhortation, which means also: "touch, take hold of, hold, cling to, touch for blessing or healing."¹¹²

These explanations give a wider possibility of interpreting whether Mary was already holding Jesus. John doesn't tell us if Mary was holding him or not, but the emphasis is on Jesus' claim: "Don't hold on to me."

Andreas Köstenberger states that the exhortation "highlights the change that has occurred in Jesus' relationship with their disciples." According to him, this verse reveals that the disciples are currently going through a period of transition during which they cannot return to the way they used to relate to their Master during his earthly ministry but are also unable to fully comprehend the nature of the new spiritual relationship with their Lord that will soon be mediated to them through the Holy Spirit. This transitional state explains the tension surrounding the period between Jesus' resurrection and the sending of the Spirit. In this context, "to touch" refers to an attempt to reconstruct the circumstances of the incarnate existence.¹¹³

In my opinion, the way Jesus sends Mary to his brothers is similar to the message in Mark, where the women are sent to the disciples: go and tell them. Jesus calls the disciples to a mission where they must tell the others what they have experienced. John wrote the gospel to tell others what he experienced from his own perspective. Jesus sends Mary to the brothers, the community she has belonged to. John wrote his gospel to his brothers and sisters in his community.

¹¹⁰ P. H. R. van Houwelingen, *Johannes*, 392.

¹¹¹ Gingrich, *Shorter lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, 113.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 24.

¹¹³ Köstenberger, *John*, 569.

In the gospel of Mark, the women are sent with the message to the disciples (μαθηταῖς), while in John, Jesus sends Mary with the message to the brothers (ἀδελφούς). Why is this difference?

Edward Klink, referring to the difference between disciples (Mark) and brothers (John) states the following:

“Jesus commands Mary to go and share this announcement with the other disciples. Interestingly, Jesus refers to the disciples as “my brothers,” with the masculine plural noun serving to denote inclusively both male and female disciples. (“my brothers and sisters”). This is the first time in the gospel that ‘brothers (and sisters)’ is used for the disciples; the term had previously been used only for biological kin. Its occurrence here, therefore, is telling. Something has changed. While maintaining a distinction between the Father's relationship to the unique son and the Father's relationship to his other sons and daughters, this statement brings the children of God in proper relation to God the Father through God the Son. Jesus' words here are the fulfillment of 1:12-13. The ascension not only finalizes and substantiates Jesus's role as the unique Son but fully enables the disciples to receive in their persons and promised sonship.”¹¹⁴

I find here a strong connection with the beginning of the gospel, in the first chapter, where John describes Jesus' mission from the Father. I see the connection between coming from the Father, connecting the disciples and “brothers” into the mission, and going to the Father.

¹¹⁴ Edward Klink, *John*, 848-9.

Conclusion

The structure of Mark 16:1-8 was shaped based on the verb forms of ἔρχομαι (to come or go). Thus, the eight verses can be grouped into three parts: 1-4, 5-7, and 8. John 20 overlaps verses 1-2, 12, and 17. According to the different accounts, John 20 can be structured as 1-2, 3-10, 11-18, 19-23, 24-29, and 30-31.

In Mark 16:1-8 we don't read about the appearance of Jesus, which bears similarities with John 20:1-2, because there is no appearance when Mary or the women first visit the tomb.

According to Mark, the women did not expect Jesus to rise, as he foretold, so they bought spices to anoint the body as a sign of respect. We don't read about such intention in John.

Both Mark and John state it was on the first day of the week (Τῆ (δὲ) μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων), early in the morning when this happened, with the difference that according to Mark the sun had risen, while John claims that it was dark.

The women's question in Mark (Who will roll the stone away?) was probably a rhetorical question from a lament, which can explain why they didn't think about the problem earlier. We have seen that the presence of the young man dressed in shining white inside the tomb can be understood as an angelophany. The angelic figure interprets the scene according to the following pattern: Jesus from Nazareth was crucified, he was raised, he is not here, go and tell the disciples and Peter. The message was clear: they had to go and say to the disciples where they could see Jesus. Galilee points to the beginning of the gospel. At the end of the gospel, we see the fear of the women, who are sent back to Galilee. Thus, Mark sends the reader back to the Galilean scene at the beginning of the Gospel, which lets him respond in a responsible way, making the decision whether he will be the faithful disciple who fulfills the messenger's command.

In John, we have seen a different narrative strand from the third verse, and the connection with Mark (overlap) is only with verses 12 and 17. John 1-2 and 11-18 seemed to be separate fragments from different accounts, probably the earliest one without the appearances of angels at the first visit. The narrative in John develops gradually as the chiasmic structure shows where Mary is highlighted until she meets and recognizes Jesus. Jesus's message is different from the Markan message, which points to the mission for the brothers in the community with strong signs of connection to the first chapter.

Differences and similarities between the resurrection accounts in Mark and John

Verses	Mark 16	Verses	John 20
1	Καὶ διαγενομένου τοῦ σαββάτου Μαρία ἢ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ Μαρία ἢ [τοῦ] Ἰακώβου καὶ Σαλώμη ἠγόρασαν ἀρώματα ἵνα ἐλθοῦσαι ἀλείψωσιν αὐτόν.	1	Τῇ δὲ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων <u>Μαρία ἢ Μαγδαληνὴ</u> ἔρχεται <u>πρωὶ σκοτίας</u> ἔτι οὔσης εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον καὶ βλέπει τὸν λίθον ἠρμένον ἐκ τοῦ μνημείου.
2	καὶ <u>λίαν πρωὶ τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων</u> ἔρχονται ἐπὶ τὸ μνημεῖον <u>ἀνατείλαντος τοῦ ἡλίου.</u>	2	τρέχει οὖν καὶ ἔρχεται πρὸς Σίμωνα Πέτρον καὶ πρὸς τὸν ἄλλον μαθητὴν ὃν ἐφίλει ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· ἦραν τὸν κύριον ἐκ τοῦ μνημείου καὶ οὐκ <u>οἶδαμεν</u> ποῦ ἔθηκαν αὐτόν.
3	καὶ ἔλεγον πρὸς ἑαυτάς· τίς ἀποκυλίσει ἡμῖν τὸν λίθον ἐκ τῆς θύρας τοῦ μνημείου;		
4	καὶ ἀναβλέψασαι θεωροῦσιν ὅτι ἀποκεκύλισται ὁ λίθος· ἦν γὰρ μέγας σφόδρα.		
5	Καὶ εἰσελθοῦσαι εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον εἶδον <u>νεανίσκον</u> καθήμενον ἐν τοῖς δεξιοῖς περιβεβλημένον στολὴν λευκὴν, καὶ ἐξεθαμβήθησαν.	12	καὶ θεωρεῖ <u>δύο ἀγγέλους</u> ἐν λευκοῖς καθεζομένους, ἓνα πρὸς τῇ κεφαλῇ καὶ ἓνα πρὸς τοῖς ποσίν, ὅπου ἔκειτο τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ.
6	ὁ δὲ λέγει αὐταῖς· μὴ ἐκθαμβεῖσθε· Ἰησοῦν ζητεῖτε τὸν Ναζαρηνὸν τὸν ἐσταυρωμένον· ἠγέρθη, οὐκ ἔστιν ᾧδε· ἴδε ὁ τόπος ὅπου ἔθηκαν αὐτόν.		
7	ἀλλὰ <u>ὑπάγετε εἶπατε</u> τοῖς <u>μαθηταῖς</u> αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ Πέτρῳ ὅτι <u>προάγει</u> ὑμᾶς	17	λέγει αὐτῇ Ἰησοῦς· μή μου ἄπτου, οὐπω γὰρ ἀναβέβηκα πρὸς τὸν πατέρα· <u>πορεύου δὲ πρὸς τοὺς</u>

	εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν· ἐκεῖ αὐτὸν ὄψεσθε, καθὼς εἶπεν ὑμῖν.		ἀδελφούς μου καὶ εἶπὲ αὐτοῖς· ἀναβαίνω πρὸς τὸν πατέρα μου καὶ πατέρα ὑμῶν καὶ θεὸν μου καὶ θεὸν ὑμῶν.
8	καὶ ἐξελθοῦσαι ἔφυγον ἀπὸ τοῦ μνημείου, εἶχεν γὰρ αὐτὰς τρόμος καὶ ἔκστασις· καὶ οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν εἶπαν· ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ.		

Similarities are that the events happened on the first day of the week, early in the morning, and the time and number of the women who arrived at the tomb differed.

In John 20:1, Magdalene comes to the tomb alone, but in the next verse (2), she speaks in the first person plural. She concludes that the body has been stolen (2) but apparently does not look into the tomb. It is unclear when or how Magdalene returned to the tomb or why she saw angels instead of the linen earlier.

The angelophany in Mark and the Christophany in John 20 contain variants of the same saying. The utterances in Mark 16:7 and John 20:17 address the women and Mary. Both are spoken near the tomb on Easter morning. Both direct Mary to speak to the disciples. Both describe what Jesus is about to do. And both are structurally similar.

According to Mark, the angelic figure addresses the message to the women, who have to go and tell the disciples (μαθηταῖς). In the gospel of John, Jesus' message is addressed to Mary, who has to go and tell the brothers (ἀδελφούς).

Different explanations for the differences

Various harmonizations, the compositional devices of ancient biographies, and the author's own editing and transforming literary devices are among the different explanations for the differences. In the harmonization process, for example, we can see how the sequence of the events is corrected and combined with information from other gospels or literature.

Compressing, spotlighting, and paraphrasing are among the compositional devices that may have been used from ancient biographies in rewriting the gospels.

The authors of the gospels may have used their own literary devices to show their aims and to formulate and transform their messages to their own audience. For instance, the Markan “sandwich technique” for the contrasts or the chiasm to highlight a gradually developing scene or character.

In the next chapter, I will focus on the details and evaluate the particular differences and explanations.

Chapter 4.

Explanation of the differences and evaluation of the different explanations

In this chapter, I will analyze and evaluate the different explanations for the differences between the resurrection accounts in the gospels of Mark and John. As we have seen, the following differences are present in the investigated pericopes: 1. the description of the time when Mary or the women arrived at the tomb, 2. the number of women at the tomb, 3. the presence or absence of angels, 4. the number of angels in the tomb, and 5. the different senders.

We can list the different explanations in a broader category in two groups. First, there are explanations that attempt to answer the differences, arguing that there are really no differences. Second, there are explanations that deal with the differences, and they are attributed to the freedom of the ancient authors to choose different devices when retelling a narrative. One can find harmonization among the explanations, stating that there are no differences. Among the explanations that state that there are differences, we can find compositional devices that were used by ancient biography writers. The following pattern better illustrates this:

1. Explanations that attempt to argue that there is no difference:
 - 1.1. Harmonization
2. Explanations that admit differences and appeal to the freedom of ancient authors to make changes when retelling a story:
 - 2.1. Compositional devices mentioned by Licona
 - 2.2. Literary devices mentioned by other commentators

Now, we will focus on the particular differences in the resurrection accounts.

4.1 The first difference

In John 20:1, we read that when Mary went to the tomb early on the first day of the week, it was still dark (πρωὶ σκοτίας). According to the resurrection account in Mark 16:1-2, when Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome were on their way to the tomb, very

early on the first day of the week, the sun had risen (ἀνατείλαντος τοῦ ἡλίου). The differences are evident in the description of light and darkness and the number of women who went to the tomb. In these verses, there seem to be two contradictions. First, we will examine the statements about darkness and sunrise, and then we search for explanations for the different numbers of women present at the tomb in the two gospels.

Michael Licona admits that it might have been dark when the women left (according to John), but the sun had risen when they arrived at the tomb (according to Mark). “Everyone who has taken time to view a sunrise knows that the amount of daylight changes significantly between ten minutes prior to sunrise and ten minutes after. When reading John, one is left with the impression that it was dark when the women arrived at the tomb.”¹¹⁵

The same harmonization is made by Jacob van Bruggen when he states that “Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Joanna, and several other women (one of whom was Salome) go to the tomb early in the morning. They set out at dawn (Matt. 28:1) and arrive in the garden at sunrise (Mark 16:2).”¹¹⁶

Raymond E. Brown provides another explanation, stating that a theological motif is behind the sequence of the events, namely the symbolic interpretation of the light. In the Synoptics, light overcomes the darkness of the tomb, and in the gospel of John, darkness for Mary carries the meaning of the empty tomb and the absence of the body.¹¹⁷

While harmonizing the differences may seem like a plausible explanation for filling in the gaps, it's important to recognize that this is not what the one or the other gospel explicitly states. Thus, harmonization would be a third variant for the two gospels, which seems an unlikely answer in our analysis's context.

Licona, who states that the evangelists used compositional devices to write their gospels in a similar way as authors of ancient biographies did after he expressed his thoughts on the harmonization solution, continues to affirm that the gospels' authors, “no different than Plutarch, had no intention of writing accounts with photographic precision,”¹¹⁸ but this claim gives no further explanation to the question.

¹¹⁵ Licona, *Why are there differences in the Gospels?* 171.

¹¹⁶ Van Bruggen, *Christ on Earth*, 275.

¹¹⁷ Raymond Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 981.

¹¹⁸ Licona, *Why are there differences in the Gospels?* 171.

The internal pieces of evidence of the texts show that it is more plausible (to think) that a theological meaning is behind the darkness and light of the pericope and the whole gospel of John starting from the first chapter: “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” (John 1:5). We can also see the shining brightness of two angels in the tomb in contrast to the darkness of the tomb. Furthermore, the symbolic meaning of the raised sun (ἀνατείλαντος τοῦ ἡλίου) in Mark is close to the young man's message in the tomb: “he was raised” (ἠγέρθη). Thus, a harmonization is less plausible than the theological meaning of the differences between the dark and sunrise.

We can also see that John and Mark use similar words and phrases that connect them despite their differences. The similarities in these verses agree that the narrated events happened early, on the first day of the week (πρωὴ τῆ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων). The different traditions used by John can explain the differences.

4.2 The second difference: the number of women present at the tomb

Another significant difference that we can see in Mark 16:1.6 and John 20:1-2 is the number of women going to the tomb and the presence or absence of the angelic figure or angel(s). Mark relates about three women who arrived at the tomb and met the young man, who looked like an angel, while John first claims that only Mary went to the tomb early in the morning when it was dark, then in the second verse, Mary tells in the first person, plural form to Peter and the Beloved Disciple that “we” don’t know where Jesus’ body is, because somebody has taken away (20:1-2).

The number of women in Mark and John	
Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ Μαρία Ἰακώβου καὶ Σαλώμη ἠγόρασαν ἀρώματα, ἵνα ἐλθοῦσαι ἀλείψωσιν αὐτόν.	Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ ἔρχεται
The women encounter the angelic figure (in Mark 16,5), and Mary is alone at the open tomb without an angelic scene (in John 20,1)	

<p>Καὶ εἰσελθοῦσαι εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον, εἶδον νεανίσκον καθήμενον ἐν τοῖς δεξιοῖς, περιβεβλημένον στολὴν λευκὴν· καὶ ἐξεθαμβήθησαν.</p>	<p>Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ ἔρχεται... καὶ βλέπει τὸν λίθον ἠρμένον ἐκ τοῦ μνημείου (Jn 20,1) καὶ οὐκ οἶδαμεν ποῦ ἔθηκαν αὐτόν. (Jn 20:2)</p>
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According to Craig Blomberg, it is unfeasible to know for sure if Mary was going to the tomb alone or with the other women; it appears that she may have run ahead, saw the empty tomb, and then dashed to inform the apostles (verse 2) before the angels appeared to the other women (Mark 16:3–7). He states: “That Mary did return and report to at least some of the disciples coheres with Luke 24:9, in which the larger group tells the men what they encountered. However one solves the problem of the ending of Mark..., the silence depicted in Mark 16:8 is obviously not the state in which the women remained, or they would never have been described as witnesses to the resurrection at all!”¹¹⁹

In my opinion, the harmonization raises the question: if Mary had run ahead, why would she run first to the male disciples after visiting the tomb and not back to the other women if they were already on their way with her? The stone did not have to be rolled away to require male strength. Harmonization seems less convincing in this case.

Another question that still needs to be explained is to whom refers the “we” in John 20:2.

Licona states that Mary probably includes Peter and the Beloved Disciple in her “we” saying, but then he affirms that it would be unnecessary to think of these two male disciples because they did not even know the tomb was empty and later adds that the Synoptics are aware of more women discovering the empty tomb, therefore “seems likely that John is aware of the presence of other women and is shining his literary spotlight on Mary Magdalene in his narrative.”¹²⁰

Furthermore, Licona concludes that:

“Plausibility for this conclusion is increased when we consider the evangelist’s use of literary spotlighting elsewhere. Even at the crucifixion scene, John shines a spotlight on the women. For in 19:25, he names those ‘standing by Jesus’ cross’ as his

¹¹⁹ Craig L. Blomberg, *The historical reliability of John’s Gospel*, 261.

¹²⁰ Licona, *Why are there differences in the Gospels*, 171.

mother, his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.' Yet in the next sentence he mentions someone else who was present: "So, when Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing there, he said to his mother, Woman behold your son."¹²¹

James Edwards, in his commentary, illuminates Mark's unique use of a 'sandwich technique' in Mark 15:40 and 16:1-8. This technique juxtaposes a pericope about the women at the cross with the courageous deed of Joseph of Arimathea, creating a stark contrast with the women's fears at the tomb.¹²² Thus, we can say that in Mark, the women, as a group, are also in the spotlight to create the contrast.

In my opinion, Mark can also use the spotlight to highlight the women. Using the spotlight here is a general statement because this literary device can be used in any other Greek drama or book from Scripture. For example, the Chronicles and the Book of Kings, when narrating about the same king, use a different approach to highlight personalities. According to the interpretation of grammatical-historical analysis, John used more sources or transformed Mark to introduce the dialogue between Mary and Jesus and formulate his own theological message.

Brown supports this presupposition, admitting and suggesting that at least three narratives can lay behind the resurrection account in John 20.¹²³ According to Beasley-Murray, this categorization has the following pattern: verses 1-2, and 11-13 narrate the women's visit to the tomb, and verses 3-10 narrate the visit of a group that was formed by male and female disciples, and verses 14-18 tell the appearance to Mary Magdalene where verses 1-2 and 11-13 are thought to be two different forms of a single story.¹²⁴ I think Brown's logical conclusion explains the question better: "while the first proposal that two forms of the story have been preserved seems more complicated, it is less open to objection than the second proposal whereby one form of the story has been divided up."¹²⁵

As we have seen among the possible explanations, the harmonization gives another possible story that is different from Mark and John; therefore, this explanation is less plausible. I

¹²¹ Ibid., 172.

¹²² James Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, 484.

¹²³ Brown, *John*, 998-1004.

¹²⁴ Beasley-Murray, *John*, WBC, 366-367.

¹²⁵ Brown, *John*, 1000.

think that the redaction was made to formulate John's own unique theological message. In my viewpoint, it is more plausible to think that the two forms of explanations that consider the differences (spotlight and redaction) are more plausible than the harmonization.

4.3. The third difference: Mary's first visit to the tomb

In this paragraph, we look for explanations regarding Mary's first visit to the tomb. Mark and John's narratives differ regarding whether an angel was at the tomb during the women's first visit. Mark tells us that when the women entered the tomb, they saw a young man sitting, but John narrates the story of Mary, who went to the tomb alone but returned without seeing angels or getting instructions from them.

Jakob van Bruggen suggests another solution with his harmonizing explanation: “To gain a clear understanding of the course of events, we have to take into account the narrative perspective of each evangelist. The best point of departure for reconstructing the sequence of events is the summary given by the men on the road of Emmaus (Luke 24:22-23)... We find here the following pattern: 1. The arrival at the tomb. 2. The entrance into the tomb. 3. The search for Jesus' body. 4. The appearance of angel(s). When we look at the individual reports given by each evangelist, we discover that all of them fit within this pattern.”¹²⁶

I would question this last statement in the light of John's account: how would it fit John 20:1-2 into the abovementioned sequence, where Mary arrives at the tomb, and she doesn't enter the tomb? Moreover, she returns to the disciples and later meets the angels and Jesus outside the tomb. I think John's narrative does not fit into this harmonization. This pattern is not the best explanation for John's narrative.

The narratives of Mark and John differ regarding whether an angel was at the tomb during the women's first visit. Whereas Mark reported the presence of an angelic figure at the empty tomb when the women arrived, John's account suggests no angels were present until Mary's second visit.

¹²⁶ Van Bruggen, *Christ on Earth*, 276.

According to Ramsey Michaels¹²⁷, as the first person to see the Lord, Mary Magdalene was the one who was supposed to share Jesus' message and good news heard at the tomb (that is supported by verses 20:18 and 25.). Jesus has gradually revealed himself to his followers through a sequence of events which can be best seen from the following chiasm in John 20:

a: Mary Magdalene looked at the tomb from the outside and saw that the stone had been moved **(v1)**.

b: The beloved disciple looked inside the tomb and saw the linen wrappings **(v. 5)**.

c: Peter entered the tomb and saw the linen wrappings and the headcloth arranged in a particular way **(vv. 6-7)**

b': 8, The beloved disciple entered the tomb, saw what Peter saw, and believed **(v. 8)**.

a': Mary Magdalene looked inside the tomb, saw two angels, and finally saw the Lord himself **(vv.11-18)**.

The effect of the arrangement is to emphasize the role of Mary Magdalene (and, to a lesser extent, the beloved disciple) in the story of Jesus' resurrection. (She, not Peter – 1Cor 15:5 – was the first to see the risen Jesus. Mary was a kind of apostle to the apostles, a messenger sent to Jesus' gathered disciples with the good news that he was rejoining his Father – and theirs – v.17-18). The Lord himself was close behind his messenger and would shortly confirm the good news in person (v.19-23).¹²⁸

In my perspective, the sequence of the events and the role of Mary given by the chiasm is similar to the narrative and the role of the women in Mark 16:1-8, where first the women's approach to the tomb is mentioned, and only after that do they get the message to bring and tell the good news to Peter and the other disciples. Finally, the women ran away because they were afraid. The similar sequences of the events strengthen the similarities between the two gospels, but probably, as the chiasm emphasizes, there existed a different narrative alone with Mary

¹²⁷ Michaels J. Ramsey, *Gospel of John*, (NICNT, Grand Rapids, MI: William Eerdmans Publishing, 2010).

¹²⁸ Michaels J. Ramsey, *John*, 340.

because she had a different meeting with the Lord and received a different message than the women in Mark.

To emphasize the role of Mary Magdalene and to compose the encounter with Jesus, John uses the literary form of chiasm that is identic with the compositional devices of the ancient biographies; therefore, the chiastic structure seems a better explanation of why Mary appears alone in John 20:1, than the reconstruction of the events in comparison with Mark. We have seen in the former paragraphs that there were probably three narratives edited and composed in John 20, and among these narratives, there was one in which there seems to be no encounter and scene with the angel or angels.

4.4 The fourth difference: the angels in the tomb

Mark 16:5	John 20:12
εἶδον νεανίσκον καθήμενον ἐν τοῖς δεξιοῖς περιβεβλημένον στολήν λευκήν,	θεωρεῖ δύο ἀγγέλους ἐν λευκοῖς καθεζομένους, ἓνα πρὸς τῇ κεφαλῇ καὶ ἓνα πρὸς τοῖς ποσίν
And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed.	and she beheld two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying

As we have seen in the previous chapter, with the grammatical-historical analysis, Edward Klink explains how John depicts the two angels in the tomb, which image resembles the typology of the Covenant Ark and Mercy Seat. However, there is no sign that other recent scholars would support/explain this interpretation in their commentaries, D. A. Carson claims that angels frequently show themselves in the Old Testament as humans. In this instance, they are not just interpretive angels, as sometimes they appear in apocalyptic literature, but are proof that God himself has been at work. One or two angels are the difference in number, which is related to gospel differences in other accounts (e.g., Mk. 10:46–52 and Mt. 20:29–34).

Regardless, John argues that the empty tomb cannot be explained by blaming grave robbers; rather, it is evidence of the presence of God's authority and power.¹²⁹

In my viewpoint, Carson's explanation suggests interpreting and harmonizing both scenes with angels as symbolic meanings for the presence of God's authority and power. This can be true for both accounts, but the tension related to the number of angels still remains.

According to Licona, Mark might shine his literary spotlight on the angelic figure who made his announcement.¹³⁰ We have also seen that his message can be associated with the risen sun, which can be symbolic due to the second mention of the daytime when the women left for the tomb. I believe the literary device can explain Mark's choice, and the difference can be best explained by their own theological decisions.

4.5. The fifth difference: the sender and the message

Mark 16:7	John 20:17	Translation of John
ἀλλὰ ὑπάγετε εἶπατε τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ Πέτρῳ ὅτι προάγει ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν· ἐκεῖ αὐτὸν ὄψεσθε, καθὼς εἶπεν ὑμῖν.	λέγει αὐτῇ Ἰησοῦς· μή μου ἄπτου, οὐπω γὰρ ἀναβέβηκα πρὸς τὸν πατέρα· πορεύου δὲ πρὸς τοὺς ἀδελφούς μου καὶ εἰπὲ αὐτοῖς· ἀναβαίνω πρὸς τὸν πατέρα μου καὶ πατέρα ὑμῶν καὶ θεόν μου καὶ θεὸν ὑμῶν.	Jesus said to her, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren, and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'

Licona acknowledges that the compositional devices used by ancient biographers are not always the best explanations:

“We have observed a number of differences in this pericope. Although many of them can be easily understood in light of the compositional devices we have observed being used by Plutarch and the evangelists elsewhere, there are a several that leave us bewildered: (1) the location where Mary Magdalene first encountered the risen Jesus, (2) Jesus's message to Mary Magdalene, (3)

¹²⁹ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 640.

¹³⁰ Licona, *Why are there differences in the Gospels?* 172.

whether there were angels at the tomb during the initial visit by the women, (4) the number of Jesus's male disciples who were present when Jesus first appeared to them, and (5) whether Jesus appeared to the male disciples in Jerusalem or in Galilee. It is of interest that all but the first of these differences can be resolved quite easily if John's Gospel were removed from our consideration."¹³¹

According to Licona, the compositional devices used in ancient biographies cannot always explain the above-mentioned differences. We try to search for further explanations because the investigation implies John's gospel.

Blomberg gives the following explanation for the difference between the sender and their messages: "To describe this intermediate stage between resurrection and ascension cuts against the grain of John's redactional tendency to collapse all of the events from crucifixion to exaltation into the single concepts of glorification and lifting up and suggests that the account reflects a genuine historical conversation. So, too, Jesus' words, my Father and your Father and my God and your God,' diverge from John's more exalted Christology that probably would not have put Mary and Jesus on this apparently equal footing."¹³²

In his profound exploration of the resurrection, Dale Allison Jr. discerns that the angel's words in Mark 16:6-7 resonate with the Christian kerygma found in 1 Cor 15:3-5. He adds that John 20:1-10 could reflect a tradition about the tomb lacking an angelic interpreter. Consequently, he challenges the historicity of the angel's message, arguing that it "reflects the kerygmatic preaching of resurrection and thus requires an understanding of the significance of the empty tomb gained from the appearance tradition."¹³³

Blomberg writes in the above-mentioned paragraph about theological differences (for example, "John's more exalted theology"), which suggests that the different traditions and contexts of the communities where the authors belonged or intended to write their gospels needed these theological perspectives.

Mark wrote probably to a gentile Christian community in Rome whose members might have been under persecution. Therefore, his readers could understand from the gospel that the disciples who fled persecution and denied Christ had the possibility of reconciliation, forgiveness,

¹³¹ Licona, *Why are there differences in the Gospels?* 181.

¹³² Craig L. Blomberg, *Historical reliability of John's Gospel*, 264-5.

¹³³ Dale C. Allison Jr, *The resurrection of Jesus*, 166.

and a new beginning to become faithful disciples. The task was to take the good news to others as part of the Christian mission. But who would do that if the male disciples were hiding and the women were afraid and did not obey?

Blomberg formulates the central purpose of the gospel of John as “fostering faith in Jesus as the Messiah and divine Son, which leads to eternal life.”¹³⁴ Furthermore, he explains this purpose and the probable context of his audience as the following:

“Textual criticism reveals two different tenses used with the subjunctive mood for the verb ‘believe.’ John is writing either that people might ‘keep on believing’...and hopefully grow in their faith, or that they simply might ‘believe.’ The textual evidence is fairly evenly balanced; if one opts for the latter, then the door is left open for an evangelistic dimension to John’s purposes.”¹³⁵

In my opinion, the fifth difference (the sender and the message) can be explained by the contexts of the communities to whom the messages were addressed. This explanation does not exclude the use of literary devices of ancient authors. Thus, we can formulate that John may use literary devices from ancient biography to retell Jesus’ resurrection narrative so that it addresses the significant issues of his community. Therefore, I suggest adding the different contexts of the communities as a possible explanation that considers the differences to the pattern mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

The pattern can be modified as the following:

1. Explanations that attempt to argue that there is no difference:
 - 1.1. Harmonization
2. Explanations that admit differences and appeal to the freedom of ancient authors to make changes when retelling a story:
 - 2.1. Compositional devices mentioned by Licona
 - 2.2. Literary devices mentioned by other commentators
 - 2.3. The different contexts of the communities

¹³⁴ Craig L. Blomberg, *Historical reliability of John’s Gospel*, 271.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 62.

In conclusion, we can affirm that the best explanations for the differences between the resurrection narratives in the gospels of Mark and John are those explanations that admit differences and appeal to the freedom of ancient authors to make changes in retelling a story.

The debate about the historical reliability of the gospels¹³⁶

Craig Evans states that the gospels are reliable historical sources, and the differences can be harmonized, but we have seen that the harmonization most of the time gives a third solution for two different narratives, which, based on the text, cannot be true just for the first or the second narrative. Bart Ehrman makes a similar statement when he claims that the result will be a fifth gospel if we harmonize the four gospels. Therefore, according to him, the gospels are not historically reliable sources because of the differences and discrepancies.

In my opinion, the differences between the gospels are due to the features and aims of each gospel because of the different agendas and messages the authors had to their audience. However, the differences can be best explained by the transformation of the gospel of Mark by John, who had a different theological view before his eyes. Thus, the difference becomes an argument for the reliability of the resurrection because not only does one person or eyewitness want to prove his or her truth, but there are more characters who cannot repeat only the same learned story or lesson.

The differences in the resurrection account strengthen the reliability of the narratives. For example, in Mark and John, the narratives begin with the women, who were the first to hear the good news and who went to tell it to others. The fact that John retells the story of Mark strengthens the reliability of the events, even though there still remains an acceptable tension.

¹³⁶ Bart D. Ehrman, Craig A. Evans, and Robert B. Stewart, *Can we trust the Bible on the Historical Jesus?* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2020).

Conclusion

We can see that the compositional devices used in ancient biographies cannot always fully explain the differences in the resurrection accounts of John and Mark. As we discovered in our investigation, the compositional devices mentioned by Michael Licona do not satisfactorily explain the differences, but in other cases, the literary devices mentioned by other commentators complete and give plausible explanations.

The harmonizations usually provide explanations to fill in the gaps but seem to give the text other meanings that cannot be stated by one or the other (John or Mark) resurrection account.

The investigation results show that the resurrection narratives contain real differences and authors of the gospels had their own theology and purposes. The way they used their own sources and traditions, with the freedom to choose from several literary devices to give the best narrative to their communities in different contexts, speaking to their own concerns, can best explain the differences between the narratives, even though there remains a possibility for tension.

John invites the reader to follow his words when retelling the story of Mark. He presents a story filled with new artistic achievements, offering esthetical beauty spiced up with literary devices in an elevated atmosphere. The story addresses the listener with its deep theological message.

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