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The Coherent Unity of Mark 10: 17-31

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Abstract

There is a prolonged discussion about the unity and the historicity of Mark 10: 17-31. Some scholars believe it consists of three distinct units. Others propose its unity, yet always with notes. For example, many scholars suggest Mark 10:17–31 a coherent narrative unit within the Gospel's larger section on the journey to Jerusalem (Mark 8:22–10:52). The author introduces the rich man in the first section (vv. 17-22). This character leaves the scene altogether in v. 22. Although Jesus still maintains the theme of riches, it clearly relates it to the rich man in the first scene, while the style of conversation in the second scene is different. The third scene is even more detached story-wise, especially the problematic floating logion in v. 31. The purpose of this paper is to affirm the coherent unity of Mark 10: 17-31, not only in a literary sense, but also historically. While some scholars tend to believe in loose connection between the three scenes, this paper suggests that the text was intentionally, or even forcefully, unified by the author. The unified theme and meticulous choices of words make this notion is more plausible so as to see the three scenes as a coherent story unit. The vocabularies make it possible to produce a concentric structure of the passages. At the same time, it emphasizes the contrast between the failed rich man and the successful disciples in answering Christ's calling. The text should have been put together intentionally by the author since the beginning of its composition. The methodological approach used in this paper is a narrative analysis, concentrating on the metonymies and the composition of the three scenes in question.

Keywords: Coherent, unity, composition, concentric, metonymy.

Introduction

The episode considered is during Jesus' journey toward Jerusalem (Mark 10:1–52). The travel setting is not simply geographical one because it metonymically stands for movement toward the cross at Calvary, it also relates to the cost of discipleship, and the unfolding revelation of the kingdom of God. The entire narrative environment is considered by various scholars to be a metonym for discipleship under the shadow of suffering.

Mark 10:17-31 is thus a challenging text. There are problems regarding the editing process and the vocabulary it uses, specifically in comparison with its parallels in Matthew and Luke. A careful reading of the text also raises several theological questions, such as the divinity of Jesus, the relationship between wealth and salvation, and exclusive discipleship. Fortunately, at least the problem of the "Needle Hole" has been resolved, thanks to the intertextual studies of Crossley (2005) and Ziemínska (2022). There is no archaeological evidence to support Anselm's notion of a "Needle's Eye Gate". On a contrary, the allegory of the impossibility of a large animal passing through the eye of a needle is a well-known Jewish expression. Cf. *Berakhot,* 55b,21: "…Know that this is the case, for one is neither shown a golden palm tree nor an elephant going through the eye of a needle in a dream. In other words, dreams only

contain images that enter a person's mind." Original text: "תְּדַע, דְּלָא מַחֲוִו לֵיהּ לְאִינָשׁ לָא דְּקָלָא דְּדַהֲבָא וְלָא פִּילָא דְּעֶיֵיל בְּקוֹפָא דְּמַחְטָא." Other texts with similar expressions: *Bava Metzia*, 38b,16; *Chizkuni on Genesis*, 41,7; *Orchot Tzadikim*, 27,36; *Rabbeinu Bahya on Leviticus*, 8,4; etc.

There is also an issue of the text's unity, regardless some convincing arguments have been made to support it. Cranfield suggests that the three parts of Mark 10: 17-31 belong together rather than being separate units (Cranfield, 1951). Several scholars also share the idea of the text's unity. Malone particularly sees Mark 10: 17-31 as a whole enclosed within the larger part of the Gospel, Mark 8: 22 – 10: 52 (Malone, 1979). He notices the recurring themes of riches, the suffering of Jesus, and discipleship in the pericope. Carl agrees that the pericope must be read as a unity that belongs to the larger context of chapters 8 – 10 (Carl, 1979). Egger believes that the pericope contains multiple threads of meaning, making it more complex yet unified (Egger, 1979). Venetz suggests that four elements interconnect the three parts or scenes (Venetz, 1981). Recently, Spear proposes the entire Mark 10: 17-31 as a complete teaching-learning transaction with two different tones: towards the rich man and towards the disciples (Spear, 2022).

From the strong support offered by the scholars stated above, the text's unity does not seem to be the main issue in discussions of the three parts or scenes of Mark 10: 17-31. A greater dispute is about the historicity of each part or scene. Did the second and third scenes happen historically after the first event? Are the three parts composed together at the same time? Or was each part originally independent, and at some point, they had been brought together at an early stage in the tradition for catechetical purposes? Cranfield proposes that the third scene (28-31) was an addition to the historical first (17-22) and second (23-27) scenes (Cranfield, 1951).

The third scene still formed a unity because of their similarity in theme with the first and second scenes. However, Légasse sees only the first scene as historical. For Légasse, the second and third scenes were added in the final redaction during the persecution period of the first community of disciples. Mark intended to relate the theme of wealth to the theme of discipleship. In other words, Légasse suggests that the second and third scenes were anachronistic in their connection to the first (Légasse, 1966).

Cranfield and Légasse disagree regarding the historical accuracy of the second scene. Cranfield's proposal is more convincing, as the dialogue between Jesus and the disciples in the second scene made sense as a logical historical reaction. On the other hand, Légasse may be correct in pointing out the anachronisms in the third scene, such as the mention of persecution and the logion in v. 31. Légasse's argument is compelling. However, he doesn't give enough evidence nor explanation of the inclusions formed by v. 13 and v. 30.

The studies of Bultmann and Degenhardt create a serious question about the historical aspect of the story. Bultmann insists that the first part (17-22) was an apophthegm. The second and third parts were added later because Mark intended to impart a discipleship discourse based on the first apophthegm (Bultmann, 1967). Degenhardt goes further to view the first scene as a reactional product. He believes that Mark edited it to match the rabbinic tradition of teaching, the classic form of a dialogue between a Jewish teacher and his disciples (Degenhardt, 1974).

Regardless of the ensued historicity and redactional problems, Bultmann and Degenhardt agree that the author put the three parts together intentionally. Their suggestions about the rabbinical dialogue in the first scene should not be neglected. Nevertheless, it is still possible that even the scene is historical, or at least partly so. Mark might have intentionally changed the structure to align with the rabbinical didactic form.

Fusco attempts to solve the issue by observing the form and redactional process of the text. To summarize, he proposes three phases in the redactional process. Yet, in the end, he does not conclusively state the exact historical setting of each story scene. At least, he supports Légasse's theory about the anachronism of the third scene (Fusco, 1991).

Methods

The method of this study is mainly narrative analysis, focusing on metonymies and composition of the passage. Further analyses are needed to solve the discrepancy among the three scenes. One of the more complex problems is the inconsistent choice of phrases referring to salvation in Mark 10: 17-31, such as “to inherit the eternal life” (v. 17), “enter the Kingdom of God” (vv. 23.24.25), “be saved” (v. 26), “eternal life” (v. 30), and the rewards promised: “treasure in heaven” (v. 21) and “a hundredfold” (v. 30). Légasse observes this issue as a clue of different origins of the scenes.

Fusco (1991) sees it as a hint of different phases of the redactional process. However, it still doesn’t make sense why the last redaction did not just modify the terms coherently. Once again, the fact that Mark intentionally left them unaltered in the final version demands a careful investigation. While the phrases’ meanings are similar, they are not the same. For example, the differences between “inherit” and “enter”; “the eternal life”, “the Kingdom of God”, and “heaven”; and so on.

Three early observations on this issue can be offered. First, Légasse and Fusco’s claims are legit. The story was redacted. However, Cranfield’s argument on the historical continuity of the first and second scenes is still compelling. Second, Mark might have faced difficulty in altering the terms for coherency because of the historical nature of the scenes. Or, third, perhaps he carefully and intentionally left it as such for particular reasons, for rhetorical or most probably, theological ones.

Discussion

Literary Connections of the Three Scenes

While the time and place settings do not seem to change, it is simple to conclude that Mark 10: 17 is a new beginning of a narrative unit. Firstly, the story begins with the introduction of an anonymous character. Mark uses only the cardinal εἷς for the figure, while Matthew states that the man was young (Matthew 19: 20), and Luke calls him a ruler (Luke 18: 18). Secondly, Mark 10: 17ff also differs thematically from the previous units. It begins with mentioning that Jesus is on his way when a man comes running and kneeling before him, asking him what to do to inherit eternal life. Mark 10: 1-12 discusses divorce, while Mark 10: 13-16 is about Jesus blessing the children. What is complicated is the discussion about the end of this unit of story.

Mark 10: 17-31 has at least three distinct sections: (1) 17-22: the dialogue between the rich man and Jesus; (2) 23-27: Jesus’ discourse about the rich to his disciples; and (3) 28-31: Peter’s remark and Jesus’ response. This passage can also be divided into four if v. 31 is considered separate. C. E. B. Cranfield believes that only the second section most likely has a historical connection with the first one. Jesus’ comment after the man’s sorrowful departure fits the context well (Cranfield, 1951). Similarly, James A. Brooks thinks it is more likely that Mark took the two sections as a unit at the beginning as his source, as they dealt with the same event in Jesus’ life (Brooks, 1992). In the story, after his conversation with the rich man, Jesus used the opportunity to emphasize the gravity of the matter to his disciples. In turn, the disciples were shocked by Jesus’ explanation.

Metonymies also connect the two sections. The first are ζωὴν αἰώνιον κληρονομήσω (v. 17)//ἔξεις θησαυρὸν ἐν οὐρανω (v. 21) and τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσελεύσονται//τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσελθεῖν (v. 23; 24; 25). The second metonymies are several verbs concerning the status of shocked or astonishment of the rich man and the disciples: στυγνάσας//λυπούμενος in v. 22 and ἐθαμβοῦντο//περισσῶς ἐξεπλήσσοντο in vv. 24.26. The third couple of metonymies are κτήματα (v. 22) and χρήματα (v. 23). The other connection between the two sections is the verb ἐμβλέπω (in vv. 21 and 27) and also περιβλέπω (in v. 23).

The third section (vv. 28-30) does not begin with any conjunction to link with the precedent verses; thus, it could indicate its independence. For that reason, Cranfield insists that the connection between the second and third stands differently (Cranfield, 1959). In other words, Cranfield's suggestion is supported by Gnilka. He also believes that the first and second are more likely traditional, while the third is Mark's addition from another independent source (Gnilka, 1978). Gnilka's main argument is based on the possible isolated origins of vv. 29f and the logion in v. 31. Despite his rejection of the traditionality of the third section, Cranfield and Gnilka agree on its thematic connection with the first and second sections, creating a coherent unit. Similarly, several scholars agree that it can be treated as part of a whole narrative unit of Mark 10: 17-31 for its parallel in theme with the first and second sections (Brooks, 1992; Collins, 2007; Culpepper, 2007; Gundry, 1993; Hooker, 1991; Mann, 1986; Schweizer, 1998; Stein, 2008).

While recognizing the story as a unity, other scholars believe that Mark was the first to put the sections together (Best, 1983; Evans, 2001; Lambrecht, 2003; Pesch, 1980). Taking a different position from Cranfield, Vincent Taylor is certain that Mark had information since the beginning to assemble Mark 10: 17-22, 23-27, and 28-31 into a whole (Taylor, 1966). While agreeing to later interests influences, especially in the saying in vv. 29f, he argues that the three parts are nonetheless authentic. Taylor's proposal that the author of Mark's gospel had a complete source with three scenes seems more plausible than Cranfield's. Cranfield's claim of the other source lacks evidence. The missing conjunction between the second and third scenes cannot be a definite reason to reject their traditional connection. It might be only the traditional stylistic choice. In fact, in vv. 27-29, each sentence commences with a verb: ἐμβλέψας in v. 27; ἤρξατο in v. 28; and ἔφη in v. 29. This stylistic choice might also serve as the connecting point between the second and third scenes.

Matthew's and Luke's versions of the story affirm that it is likely that the three sections had initially belonged together. The three synoptic versions of the story testify to the same sequence of scenes: a man asking for the way to inherit eternal life, Jesus' shocking statement with the disciples' response, and Peter's question/statement with Jesus' response.

The third section is coherent with the first and second because it fits well with the theme of possession while contrasting the rich man and the disciples. Story-wise, the disciples' shocked condition in the second scene would be unresolved without Peter's insight in the third scene. Peter's statement in the third scene (v. 28) also serves as a perfect answer to Jesus' offers in v. 21 (cf. the verb ἀκολουθέω in both verses) while counter-measuring the man's rejection in v. 22. His statement can only be comprehended in the context of the first scene.

The phrase ζωὴν αἰώνιον in v. 17 and v. 30 forms inclusion, further affirming the narrative coherency. Together with the verb λάβῃ, the phrase ζωὴν αἰώνιον provides a metonym to ζωὴν αἰώνιον κληρονομήσω (v. 17)//ἔξεις θησαυρὸν ἐν οὐρανω (v. 21) and τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσελεύσονται//τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσελθεῖν (v. 23; 24; 25), connecting the three sections.

Table 1 Connections of Words of Phrases in the Three Sections/Scenes (Author's own)

Type of Connection	Section I: vv. 17-22	Section II: vv. 23-27	Section III: vv. 28-31
Metonymy	[17] ζωὴν αἰώνιον κληρονομήσω [21] ἔξεις θησαυρὸν ἐν οὐρανῷ	[23] τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσελεύσονται. [24] τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσελθεῖν· [25] τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσελθεῖν. [26] δύναται σωθῆναι	[30] λάβῃ … ζωὴν αἰώνιον.
	[22] ἔχων κτήματα πολλά	[23] τὰ χρήματα ἔχοντες [25] πλούσιον	

	[22] στυγνάσας and λυπούμενος	[24] ἐθαμβοῦντο [26] περισσῶς ἐξεπλήσσοντο	
Exact or similar words or phrases	[17] ζωὴν αἰώνιον		[30] ζωὴν αἰώνιον
	[18] ὁ θεός	[27] τῷ θεῷ	
	[19] πατέρα and μητέρα		[29] μητέρα and πατέρα [30] μητέρας
	[20] ἔφη		[29] ἔφη
	[21] ἐμβλέψας	[23] περιβλεψάμενος [27] ἐμβλέψας	
	[21] ἀκολούθει		[28] ἠκολουθήκαμέν

The only connecting point of all three sections is the metonymies regarding salvation. It is the main theme bridging the sections. Other than the metonymies, there is no other connecting word or phrase between the second and third sections. However, the third section is necessary to complete the story. Both the second and third sections develop particular themes from the first. The second section is connected to the first, depicting the danger of wealth (cf. κτήματα in v. 22, χρήματα in v. 23, and πλούσιον in v. 25), Jesus' understanding for both parties (ἐμβλέπω in vv. 21.27 and also περιβλέπω in v. 23), and their similar shocking responses (στυγνάσας// λυπούμενος in v. 22 and ἐθαμβοῦντο//περισσῶς ἐξεπλήσσοντο in vv. 24.26). However, the second section lacks the continuation of the theme of discipleship and the commandments from the first. Furthermore, it lacks the contrasting element of choice to bring the story into a full circle. Peter's statement is just the right turning point to highlight the contrast between the rich man's rejection of Jesus' offer to sell everything and follow (ἀκολούθει in v. 21) him and the disciples' choice of leaving everything and following (ἠκολουθήκαμέν in v. 28) Jesus. The mention of the act of leaving μητέρα and πατέρα in the third section serves as a contrast to the commandments of honouring them.

Regarding verse 31, it seems that it may have been an additional statement following other texts, as indicated in Matthew 19: 30; 20: 16; Luke 13: 30; Mark 9: 35; Matthew 20: 8; and Gospel of Thomas 4. This possibility is supported by the fact that only Mark and Matthew have it, while Luke does not. Taylor believes it "is a Markan appendage derived from a primitive collection." (Taylor, 1966). For Cranfield, this last added verse puts the pericope in an eschatological context (Cranfield, 1951). It was found in texts with eschatological themes (such as Matthew 20: 16 and Luke 13: 30). The problem is Wingerden's claim that the theme is absent in the three scenes of Mark 10: 17-30 (Wingerden, 2021). The seemingly absent eschatological theme in verses 17-30 could mean two things. First, verse 31 is an independent maxim added by Mk for a specific purpose, while Lk chose not to include it. Second, the author of Mark's gospel might have only been able to place the maxim at the end due to the historical origins of the three scenes. He couldn't find any other opportunity to include other eschatological references because the scenes were too original for him to alter. At this point, Wingerden's study offers an intriguing perspective. Perhaps Luke struggled to incorporate this theme into the preceding sections and left it out entirely. However, the phrase cannot be entirely excluded from Mark 10: 17-30. All witness sources include it. It was most likely the historical last verse of Mark 10: 17-31.

The subsequent episode (Mark 10: 32-34) is a new narrative unit focusing on Jesus' third passion announcement. Despite the issue regarding the traditional source of the third section, Mark 10: 17-31 can be treated as a coherent unit in three sections. While Mark 10: 17-22 is a complete story on its own, Mark 10: 23-27 and Mark 10: 28-31 cannot exist independently. Furthermore, the rich man's sad ending is countered perfectly by the rewards promised to Jesus' disciples. The uniting theme of the text is the question about salvation, with the subthemes of wealth as the hindrance to eternal life and Christian discipleship as the solution. The awareness of the subthemes reveals the implied uniting theme: the contrast between the way of the rich and the way of Christian discipleship.

Concentric Structure of Mark 10: 17-31

The structurization or composition of those three sections should further affirm their coherency. Coulot and Gundry believe that the three sections or scenes of Mark 10: 17-31 can be organized based on literary criteria such as inclusion, chiastic structure, and the story's content. They propose concentric structures for Mark 10: 17-31 and its sections.

v. 17	A		-	going forward on his way
	B		-	theme of salvation: eternal life
v. 19		C	-	you know the commandments
		D	-	quote from Exodus 20: 13-16.12
v. 20		C'	-	I observed all these
v. 21	B'		-	theme of salvation: you will have treasure in heaven.
v. 22	A'		-	he went away

Diagram 1 Coulot's Concentric Structure of Mark 10: 17-22 (Coulot, 1982)

The central point in Coulot's proposed concentric structure is the quote from Exodus 20: 13-16.12. Sänger sees the juxtaposed of the commandments as Jesus' demands to the Christian community, creating justice to build the Kingdom of God (Sänger, 2021). Although the altered list of commandments is not explicitly mentioned, the juxtaposition is denoted. Compare to Gundry's simpler structure:

v. 17	a		-	a rich man approaches Jesus with a question
vv. 18-19		b	-	Jesus answers with the demands of the Law
v. 20			c -	the man responds citing his obedience to the Law
v. 21		b'	-	Jesus answers with his own demands
v. 22	a'		-	the man departs with a failure to meet the demands

Diagram 2 Gundry's Concentric Structure of Mark 10: 17-22 (Gundry, 1993)

Both Coulot and Gundry have proposed valid concentric structures for interpreting the text. However, there is an issue with the missing of Jesus' reproach in verse 18, which states that only God is good in both proposed structures. This reproach seems out of place and will continue to be difficult in exegesis and theological discussions. Nonetheless, Coulot's proposed structure is more acceptable than Gundry's. Gundry places significance on the man's claim of having observed the Law in his proposed structure.

Coulot continues to propose the structures of Mark 10: 23-25 and 10: 26-31. Mark 10: 23-25: (A) v. 23: how hard will those who have riches enter into the Kingdom of God; (B) v. 24: how difficult it is to enter the Kingdom of God; and (A'). Coulot's concentric structure of Mark 10: 26-30: (A) vv. 26-27: the theme of salvation: who can be saved; (B) v. 28: here we have left everything… (B') v. 29: there is no one who has left… (A') vv. 30-31: the theme of salvation: who does not receive… eternal life (Coulot, 1982).

Coulot's proposal is highly debatable. The division itself is the main problem. Moreover, v. 31 does not seem to have any concentric relation to the other verses. Gundry, on the other hand, offers an alternative concentric structure of Mark 10: 23-27: (a) v. 23: Jesus looks around at the disciples and remarks how difficultly those who have means will enter God's Kingdom; (b) v. 24a: the disciples are amazed; (c) vv. 24b-25: Jesus remarks how difficult it is for a rich person to enter God's Kingdom; (b') v. 26: the disciples ask a question out of extreme astonishment; (a') v. 27: Jesus looks intently at the disciples and remarks that only God can

save a rich person. Gundry's proposed structure evidently ignores that Jesus repeated the difficulty of entering the Kingdom not only once but twice.

The second statement differs substantially from the first and third. In the second remark, Jesus stated, "Children, how hard it is to enter the Kingdom of God!" The difficulty of entering the Kingdom is for everyone. Thus, Gundry's structure is objectionable.

Gundry proceeds to offer an a-b-a'-b' structure for Mark 10: 28-31: (a) v. 28a: leaving all; (b) v. 28b: following Jesus; (a') vv. 29-30: Concerning rewards of those who have left all; (b') v. 31 depicts the final last position of those who refuse to follow him and the final first position of those who do follow him (Gundry, 1993).

This proposed structure seems too forced. Finding any pattern or concentric structure in this final section as an independent unit is difficult. However, combining the section with the first and second forms a visible concentric structure. Coulot proposes the following structure of the whole Mark 10: 17-30:

v. 17	A						-	eternal life
v. 19		B					-	honour your father and your mother
v. 20			C				-	ἔφη
v. 21				D			-	follow
v. 23a					E		-	having looked… Jesus said
v. 23b						F	-	difficulty for the rich to enter God's Kingdom
v. 24a							-	the disciples were astonished
v. 24b						G	-	how difficult it is to enter God's Kingdom
v. 25						F'	-	difficulty for the rich to enter God's Kingdom
v. 26							-	they were astonished beyond measure
v. 27					E'		-	having fixed his gaze on them, Jesus said
v. 28				D'			-	follow
v. 28			C'				-	ἔφη
v. 29		B'					-	father or mother
v. 30	A'						-	eternal life

Diagram 3 Coulot's Concentric Structure of Mark 10: 17-30 (Coulot, 1982)

Again, v. 18 is missing. Additionally, Coulot (1982) intentionally leaves out v. 31 in this structure. The decisions are reasonable. To find the concentric resemblance to those two verses is difficult. However, the bigger issue with Coulot's proposal is the missing social commandments in v. 19, especially "do not defraud." This particular commandment is vital to highlight Jesus' alteration of the commandments. The even more severe problem of this proposed structure is that Coulot does not mention the rich man's rejection and Peter's affirmation. These two elements of the story should be indispensable.

Several notes can be given relating to the above issues:

The rush gesture of the rich man at the beginning of the story is probably connected to the logion in v. 31. He came to Jesus running (v. 17), implying his hasty effort to reach his goal. This gesture shares a faint parallel to Jesus' saying that many who are first will be last. Because of their faint connection, they will be put in brackets.

Coulot's decision to leave out v. 18 is reasonable. This verse is too detached from the other verses of the story. However, Coulot seems to ignore the chiasm formed by οὐδείς in verses 18 and 29, again, for a plausible reason. The premise of v. 18 is clearly different from its counterpart in v. 29. Nevertheless, Mark's gospel is known for its hidden intentions in duality. Therefore, the repetition of the same word should not be neglected.

Jesus' altered list of commandments foreshadowed how his disciples would leave their houses and fields (rather than defrauding) and families, especially their parents (rather than honoring them). Jesus' gesture of looking at the man intently (ἐμβλέψας) in v. 21 is related to his love, denoted by the verb ἠγάπησεν in the same verse. Out of this love, he offers the man a solution to his shortcomings and an opportunity to follow him. However, the rich man rejects him in v. 22. These story elements correspond with the latter part when Jesus similarly looked intently (the same verb ἐμβλέψας) at the disciples and then proclaimed God's omnipotence, implying his loving grace to assist them in a seemingly impossible goal of entering his Kingdom. As a direct response to Jesus' statement, Peter affirmed the disciples' choice to leave all and follow him, contrasting the rich man's choice (v. 28) (cf. Collins, 2007). Jesus' two substantially different statements in vv. 24b-25 insinuates the difference between a person in general and a rich man in particular in their struggle to enter the Kingdom of God. It is already hard for everyone to enter. However, it is ridiculously more so for a rich man who is focussed only on material wealth.

The commandments in v. 19, especially "do not defraud" and "honour your father and your mother," form contrasting concentric connections to the disciples' way of leaving their houses, fields, or families, especially their parents. With those six notes considered, I would like to propose a new concentric structure of Mark 10: 17-31:

v. 17	[a]					-	came running
v. 17		A				-	ζωὴν αἰώνιον
v. 18-19			B			-	οὐδείς… do not defraud; honour your father and mother
v. 20				C		-	ἔφη
v. 21-22					D	-	ἐμβλέψας; ἠγάπησεν; the rich man rejects Jesus' offers to sell all and *follow* him
v. 23a						E	- Jesus' initial statement, "How hard will it be for those who have riches to enter the Kingdom of God!"
v. 24a						F	- the disciples were astonished
v. 24b						G	- universal difficulty in entering the Kingdom of God
v. 25						G'	- particular difficulty (of a rich) in entering the Kingdom of God
v. 26						F'	- the disciples were astonished beyond measure
v. 26b						E'	- The disciples' response, "Then who can be saved?"
v. 27-28					D'		- ἐμβλέψας; "For men impossible, but not for God; all things possible for God;" Peter affirms having left all and *followed* Jesus.
v. 29				C'			- ἔφη
v. 29-30			B'				- οὐδείς… has left house… or fields or mother or father
v. 30		A'					- ζωὴν αἰώνιον
v. 31	[a']						- many who are first will be last…

Diagram 4 Author's Proposed Concentric Structure of Mark 10: 17-31

Implication

This concentric structure highlights the universal and particular difficulty of entering the Kingdom of God. In this light, God's love and grace become more essential. The structure also affirms the story's implication in contrasting the way of the rich to Christian discipleship. Thus, the concentric structure depicts the coherent unity of Mark 10: 17-31. In particular, the correlation between ἐμβλέψας; ἠγάπησεν; the rich man's rejection in vv. 21-22 and ἐμβλέψας; "For men impossible, but not for God; all things possible for God;" Peter's affirmation in vv. 27-28. The correlation between those verses provides evidence of the coherency of the three scenes. The opening scene sets up a favourable scenario for Jesus to elucidate on the perils of wealth as a significant obstacle to salvation (second scene). It also sets a background for Jesus to explain how God's grace operates through abandonment, and that following him will result in the disciples receiving salvation and even more (third scene).

Conclusion

Mark 10: 17-31 is a coherent story unit. The second section (vv. 23-27) has a historical connection to the first. The third section (vv. 28-30) fits in well with the theme of the passage. The second and third sections are dialogues explaining the failure of the rich man's appeal in the first section. Peter's statement and inclusion of verses 17 and 30 suggest a connection between the first and third sections. The combination of the verb ἐμβλέψας; ἠγάπησεν; and the rich man's rejection in vv. 21-22 corresponds to the verb ἐμβλέψας; "For men impossible, but not for God; all things possible for God;" and Peter's affirmation in vv. 27-28. These corresponding verses provide a link connecting the three sections or scenes. Verse 31 is a floating logion and seemingly, does not match the overall themes of vv. 17-30. However, the verse must be authentic since all witnesses include it in their versions. If Mark intentionally put all the sections together, v. 31 should not be considered a standalone verse. Furthermore, it does not have any clear connection to the subsequent passage. The proposed concentric structure demonstrates its subtle connection to the rich man's eagerness to meet up with Jesus. The concentric structure of Mark 10: 17-31 also emphasizes how difficult it is for anyone, especially a rich man, to enter the Kingdom of God. With that emphasis, the necessity of God's love and grace in the process becomes conspicuous. The concentric structure puts in contrast the way of the rich from the way of true Christian discipleship. The thematic and inclusive connection between the three sections create a sense of belonging together.

Limitations of this study are generally theological. This study lacks a sufficient demonstration of how the Old Testament Law relate to the Christian discipleship. Moreover, the eschatological nuance of the text is untouched. In Mark 10: 17-31, everyday actions carry deeper meaning. The rich man stands for the world's way of finding identity in possessions. Jesus' loving gaze is not just a glance but God's gentle invitation. Wealth symbolizes a self-made identity apart from God and "follow me" is a call not merely to walk with Jesus, but to entrust one's life to him. The journey to Jerusalem becomes the path of true discipleship. Through these symbols, Mark shows that following Jesus is lived out in real, human choices, not abstract ideas.

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