

Jesus' Conflicts with the Leaders of the People

Mark 2:1—3:6 and par.

The Healing of a Paralytic (Mark 2:1–2; Matt 9:1–8; Luke 5:17–26)

ΚΑΙ ΕΙΣΕΛΘΩΝ ΠΑΛΙΝ ΕΙΣ Καφαρναούμ δι' ἡμερῶν ἠκούσθη ὅτι εἰς οἶκόν
ἐστίν. This opening sentence is thoroughly transitional.

The reading εἰσελθὼν πάλιν is represented in B D L 33 cop arm and eth. Most of the uncials resolve the construction into εἰσῆλθεν . . . καὶ. A C E Δ, and F have ὁ ις after εἰσῆλθεν. Most of the minuscules, the Vulgate and ζ have πάλιν εἰσῆλθεν. The lectionaries tend to drop this πάλιν, which usually refers backward to what has preceded. Despite good witnesses (B D L 33 latt cop), the reading ἐν οἴκῳ should be regarded as an atticizing improvement. A C Γ Δ offer εἰς οἶκον (cf. εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν, 1:21).

The grammatical resolution of this sentence, however, is disputed, as it depends upon whether δι' ἡμερῶν is to be connected with εἰσελθὼν or with ἀκούσθη. The former is more likely.¹ Δι' ἡμερῶν, rendered by the Vulgate as *post dies*, means “in the course of (some) days,” or “after (some) days.”² Since the event that follows took place during Jesus' second visit to Capernaum, the difference in time has to be indicated. But this chronological reference is not specific, and thus is best regarded as evidence of a caesura that has been inserted here by the evangelist. The word πάλιν is another

1. Contra Wohlenberg, who alternates on the question of whether ἠκούσθη is used personally or impersonally (Wohlenberg, *Markus*, 73), and B. Weiss, who confidently chooses the latter option and regards εἰσελθὼν as an anacoluthon (B. Weiss, *Markus und Lukas*, 31).

2. One codex gets the sense just right when it inserts the word ὀλίγων.

such insertion, one of Mark's favorite expressions (he uses it about thirty times). We cannot tell whether the verse contains any further compositional work on the part of the evangelist, but we can observe that from the very beginning it did contain one designation of place: εἰς οἶκόν. The details that follow (no room in front of the door, removing the roof, and the word καθήμενοι)³ all indicate that Jesus has entered a house. Exactly what, however, does εἰς οἶκόν mean? Although the definite article is missing, perhaps we should not think of a generic house, but of one particular house. At that time εἰς οἶκόν and εἰς τὸν οἶκόν were used interchangeably, and in this context, a reference to a "house" in Capernaum is probably a reference to the house of Peter, which has already been mentioned in chapter one.⁴ That is why the evangelist introduced Καφαρναούμ, along with πάλιν and δι' ἡμερῶν. The word ἡκούσθη, which is missing from Matthew and Luke, can be ascribed to Mark's redactional activity. Some sort of transition had to be created from 1:45 to 2:1: Jesus goes into the city, but not openly; he comes to Capernaum secretly, and the people hear that he is εἰς οἶκον. The original narrative would have begun simply with the words καὶ ἦν εἰς οἶκον (or ἐν οἴκῳ). Nothing more is necessary in order to understand the narrative that follows. The details of time and place are not firmly anchored in the narrative itself, and the narrative loses none of its character when literary and compositional analysis shows that we have to remove those details. They are nothing more than stopgaps that fill in the obvious break between chapter one and chapter two.

The other two Synoptics show how easily such "fill-ins" could be revised or changed. Matthew puts the story in a completely different position, after the healing of the demoniac in Gadara. To that end he has to insert a journey on the sea: καὶ ἐμβὰς εἰς πλοῖον διεπέρασεν καὶ ἦλθεν εἰς τὴν ἰδίαν πόλιν (Matt 9:1).

The tradition swings back and forth between πλοῖον and τὸ πλοῖον. No final answer is possible here, since the use of the article in the κοινή is highly irregular. C F et.al. insert ὁ ις after ἐμβὰς.

3. Translations and interpretations vary. The Vulgate has *in domo*; Luther, "im Hause." Weizsäcker, "zu Hause"; Klostermann: "zu Hause"; Loisy: "à la maison"; Lagrange (*Évangile selon Saint Marc*, 30), "dans une maison." Lagrange rightly notes that the expression is "probably synonymous with οἶκοι, or in Latin, *domi*." Cf. 1 Cor 11:34, where ἐν οἴκῳ means "at home," as it also does in 1 Cor 14:35. Wellhausen is correct when he writes: "In such expressions the article can easily drop in or out, sometimes in different manuscripts of the same text. Like the desert or the mountain, the house is at his disposal" (Wellhausen, *Mark*, 16). Cf. also Loisy, *Mark*, 83.

4. J. Weiss confidently observes: "We can hear the narrative style of Peter in this short and vague expression. Even though it was his house, he does not describe it any more precisely" (J. Weiss, *Das älteste Evangelium*, 155).

The idiosyncratic reading in F, which has Ἰουδαίαν πόλιν instead of ἰδίαν πόλιν, must have been caused by a misunderstanding.

Matthew offers no designation of time, because his arrangement of the stories makes the phrase δι' ἡμερῶν superfluous. ἰδία πόλις is to be understood as “his city,” i.e., Capernaum (not Nazareth, as Jerome mistakenly thought), since it has already been mentioned as Jesus' base of operations in 4:13, but there is no reference to a house. We encounter this kind of disregard for locations frequently in Matthew (cf. Matt 12:23; 15:15, 21; 17:19; 19:9 vs. Mark 3:20; 7:17, 24; 9:28; 10:10). The pressure of the crowd is also missing. Matthew drops these painterly details, because he is interested only in the words and deeds of Jesus, yet his shorter version of the story is just as understandable as the earlier one.⁵

Luke 5:17 is quite different. It makes a chronological detail out of δι' ἡμερῶν by turning it into ἐν μιᾷ τῶν ἡμερῶν.⁶ Luke also does not name Capernaum as the location for this event, for as we have already seen, Luke presents the Galilean ministry of Jesus according to a clear plan: first Nazareth, then Capernaum, then the area around Capernaum. After Jesus leaves Capernaum at the end of chapter 4, it would have been inappropriate for him to go back again to that city. In Luke he does not come back to Capernaum until 7:1, after a long ministry in the open country and only after his great sermon on the plain.⁷ In his introduction Luke says nothing about an οἶκος, even though (as it does in Mark) the whole story plays out in a house.

Thus there is no firm itinerary in this tradition, nor any firm or clear chronology. While the result of our analysis of Mark 2:1 may be negative, these results are important.

In the course of the narrative (Mark 2:6), γραμματεῖς step onto the stage, and their arrival is somewhat unexpected. Of course we have already seen that the oldest narratives had no interest in pragmatic treatments of characters. In this regard Luke is different from the other evangelists, as he sets the scene by connecting these γραμματεῖς (or νομοδιδάσκαλοι) with the Φαρισαῖοι, and he tells us whence they have come: οἱ ἦσαν ἐκκληθότες ἐκ πάσης κώμης τῆς Γαλιλαίας καὶ Ἰουδαίας καὶ Ἱερουσαλὴμ (Luke 5:17). This is due not to some special Lukan tradition, but rather to the fact that Luke

5. Wellhausen is of the opinion that this “abbreviation of Mark 2:1–4 makes Matt 9:2 (ἰδὼν τὴν πίστιν) seem unnatural or even supernatural” (Wellhausen, *Matthew*, 40).

6. Loisy is especially observant here: “Luke bleaches out and transforms the real and living character of the narrative” (Loisy, *Les Évangiles synoptiques*, 1:471). Compare ἐν μιᾷ τῶν ἡμερῶν here with ἐν μιᾷ τῶν πόλεων in 5:12.

7. Wellhausen is incorrect when he comments on this passage by suggesting that Luke was indifferent about Jesus' itinerary.

the author is putting things together here, and he may have managed to put them together correctly.⁸

In Mark's version of the story we cannot tell whether the scribes came from Jerusalem, but there is another way to produce a perspective that is oriented to Jerusalem. Those who stick to the outline of Jesus' ministry as presented in the Gospel of John do so by inserting a trip to Jerusalem right here, before Mark 2:1. Jesus then comes back to Capernaum from that trip.⁹ It goes without saying that these kinds of efforts at harmonization are desperate attempts to fill in the gaps in Mark's account with whatever insertions might be necessary. Of greater significance is the fact that even the harmonizers can see the gap in the text at this point. Awareness of that gap points us toward both a correct understanding of the literary style of this Gospel and a proper evaluation of the techniques by which it was composed. Perhaps there are times when a harmonizer may actually be seeing the text more clearly than a scholar who thinks the phrase δι' ἡμερῶν is a strong chronological indicator and means "after a few days."

The Call of Levi and Dinner with the Tax Collectors

(Mark 2:13–17; Matt 9:9–13; Luke 5:27–32)

¹⁸ Καὶ ἐξῆλθεν πάλιν παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν· καὶ πᾶς ὁ ὄχλος ἤρχετο πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ ἐδίδασκεν αὐτούς. ¹⁴ καὶ παράγων εἶδεν Λευεὶν τὸν τοῦ Ἀλφαίου καθήμενον ἐπὶ τῷ τελώνιον.

Some manuscripts (D, e.g.) have dropped πάλιν and inserted ὁ ις after ἐξῆλθεν, and there may also be other changes here that

8. Spitta says: "Here we are plainly being guided into the region of Judea . . . In Mark and Matthew this contrast in the pericopes is hinted at only once, anticipating what comes later" (Spitta, *Die synoptische Grundschrift*, 74). Wellhausen recognizes that Luke describes the opponents of Jesus as having come from a distance. He says that the people—not the Pharisees and scribes—have gathered from all of Galilee—not Judea and Jerusalem (Wellhausen, *Luke*, 17). In my judgment Codex D, upon which Wellhausen depends here, conforms to the text of Mark and Matthew. That is also to disagree with Merx, who argues on the basis of this variation in the tradition that Luke 5:17 is overdone and fragile (Merx *Markus und Lukas*, 219). On the other hand Spitta places great value on the fact that τῆς Γαλιλαίας is an insertion. Luke 5:17, he says, is clear evidence for the fact that according to the Synoptic *Grundschrift*, of whose characteristics traits the canonical Mark and Matthew were ignorant, the healing of the paralytic took place in a city in Judea (Spitta, *Die synoptische Grundschrift*, 76).

9. So esp. the Catholic exegetes. Cf. J. Belser, "Zur Evangelienfrage," 363: "In this turn of phrase (δι' ἡμερῶν) we can glimpse an indication of the fact that during these intervening days Jesus has undertaken a journey to Jerusalem, for the feast in John 5, after which he returned to his beloved place, Capernaum."