

SLOW TO UNDERSTAND: THE DISCIPLES IN SYNOPTIC PERSPECTIVE

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The problem of the portrayal of the disciples of Jesus has been the focus of much scholarly investigation. Discussion has been pursued primarily from the Marcan perspective, in keeping with its assumed priority. Consequently, Mark is seen as creating the disciples' incomprehension to serve his theological intent. The correctness of this notion is questioned in this study, which seeks to determine whether incomprehension was an authentic experience of Jesus' original disciples, and whether slowness of understanding was to be expected in teaching and learning contexts.

In chap. 1, recent scholarship on the disciples is surveyed to identify the main issues, approaches, trends, and scope of the ongoing debate. A Synoptic approach to the motif of incomprehension is proposed because of the unsettled question of Marcan priority, the equally—if not at times more—disparaging portrayal of the disciples in the other Synoptics, and the need to explain the tradition history of the seemingly negative portrayal of the disciples.

Next, the ascription of the prevailing image of the disciples to Mark, or the extent to which the prevailing image is Marcan, is questioned (1) in light of the parallel pericopae dealing with the disciples in the other Synoptics, whose authors may no longer be seen as mere redactors of Mark, and (2) by tracing the tradition history of disciples' initial incomprehension, and eventual understanding when hearing and sight converge. These concerns are treated in chaps. 2 and 3, respectively.

In the first instance, it was found that the respective portraits of the disciples in each of the Synoptics seem to betray a well-established tradition from which it was difficult—if not impossible—to break away. In the second instance, it became evident that this tradition is recognizable in the common terms and concepts of comprehension/incomprehension in OT theophanic and didactic contexts and in later canonical and extra-canonical Jewish writings of the Second-Temple period as well as in Greek literature, especially in texts relating to Greek *paideia*.

The convergence of hearing and sight for comprehension seems to be a recurring feature in Jewish writings and in Greek literature, and the conclusion in chap. 4 of this dissertation is that a more accurate image of the disciples emerges when these observations are brought to bear upon the Synoptics.