

THE DEFINITION AND FUNCTION OF MARKAN INTERCALATION AS
ILLUSTRATED IN A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF SIX PASSAGES

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Intercalation of stories is a stylistic feature of the Gospel of Mark which has been recognized in scholarly research since the early twentieth century. However, two problems have not been satisfactorily solved in relation to intercalation in Mark. The first is obtaining a focused definition of this storytelling pattern. The second is to explain its function in the Markan story.

The purpose of the current research was to resolve these two questions by a narrative analysis of six passages commonly accepted as illustrating intercalation. The six passages are Mark 3:20-35; 5:21-43/ 6:7-32; 11:12-25; 14:1-11; and 14:53-72. These passages were each analyzed with respect to common categories of narrative analysis—settings, characters, actions and plot, time, narrator and implied reader, and stylistic features.

The data generated by this analysis were presented and common features of all of the intercalations were noted. A series of narrative characteristics which all the intercalations share was established, leading to a narrative definition of intercalation. The Evangelist has brought two stories *together* in intercalation, while maintaining their *separateness*. It was established that the purpose, or function, of this pattern was to create a dramatized irony between two or more characters and their actions in the separate stories. The ironies produced by this pattern speak to major theological themes in Mark, especially Christology and discipleship.