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NT811, Exegesis of Mark

Synoptic Problem

Introduction

Mark 6:1-13

Mark 6:1-13 contains two different events in the ministry of Christ. The first half, Mark 6:1-6a, describes Jesus' rejection at Nazareth. It is paralleled in Matthew 13:53-58 and possibly Luke 4:16-30. The second half, Mark 6:6b-13 describes the commissioning of the Twelve disciples for ministry. It is clearly paralleled in Matthew 10:1,9-14 and Luke 9:1-6.

A few things are noteworthy at the outset. First, the two events that Mark describes in 6:1-13 are narratively separated in both Matthew and Luke. Matthew and Luke describe a number of events in Christ's ministry occurring between the two events described consecutively in Mark 6:1-13.

Second, Matthew narrates the events in reverse order to Mark. In Matthew the rejection at Nazareth, which Mark narrates first, takes place in chapter 13. However, the sending of the twelve, which Mark narrates second, occurs in Matthew 10.

Third, Mark 6:1-6a may or may not have a parallel in Luke. Lane sees Luke 4:16-30 and Mark 6:1-6a as narrating two different visits to Nazareth.¹ The only clear verbal parallel

¹William L. Lane, The Gospel of Mark (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 201.

between the two passages is the famous "prophet without honor" statement.

Rejection at Nazareth

Mark 6:1-6a (Matthew 13:53-58; Luke 4:16-30)

There is a very clear verbal relationship between Mark 6:1-6a and Matthew 13:53-58. Both Mark and Matthew follow an almost identical sequence of events. Jesus arrives at his hometown and begins teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath. After asking a series of questions, the astonished listeners are offended. Jesus makes the "prophet without honor" statement and has a very limited ministry. In the end, Jesus marvels at their lack of faith.

In addition to the similarity between the order of events, Mark and Matthew use many of the same words and phrases. Listed below are some of the more significant (and intriguing) verbal parallels.

1. Mark 6:2 "ποθεν τουτω ταυτα" An almost identical question is asked in Matthew 13:56 "ποθεν ουν τουτω ταυτα παντα". Interestingly, in Mark, this is the *first* question asked by the crowd; however, in Matthew this is the *last* question asked by the crowd.

2. Mark 6:3 "και εσκανδαλιζοντο εν αυτω" Not only is this exact sentence found in Matthew 13:57, both Mark and Matthew use the sentence in the same way. In both gospels, the sentence closes the doubts raised by the listeners and provides a summary of the peoples response to Jesus: they were offended at him.

3. Mark 6:4 "ουκ εστιν προφητης ατιμος ει μη εν τη πατριδι" This exact phrase is found in Matthew 13:57. The larger sentence, while not paralleled precisely, is remarkably similar. Luke also records the "prophet without honor" statement using many of the same words. Interestingly, John 4:44 also mentions this statement of Jesus.

4. Mark 6:6a "δια την απιστων αυτων" Here is a phrase that is identical to the one used in Matthew 13:58. Further significance is found in the way the phrase is used. In Mark and Matthew, this phrase closes the pericope. The reader is left with a picture of Jesus marveling at the unbelief of the people.

The only clear verbal relationship between Mark 6:1-6a and Luke 4:16-30 is found in Luke 4:24, "οτι ουδεις προφητης δεκτος εστιν εν πατριδι αυτου" This sentence is very similar to Mark 6:4. Based on this evidence, there remains a possibility that Luke is recounting a different event.

The Sending of the Twelve

Mark 6:6b-13 (Matthew 9:35; 10:1, 7-11, 14; Luke 9:1-6)

For this pericope Matthew, Mark, Luke follow the same order of events. The flow of the narrative in all three synoptics is very similar. Jesus gathers the twelve. He gives them authority over evil spirits. He gives them instructions about what to take on their journeys. The disciples are instructed about finding lodging and what to do if a region does not welcome them.

Unlike Mark 6:1-6a, Mark 6:6b-13 contains numerous clear verbal parallels in both Matthew and Luke. Although many of the

same words are used, there are fewer extended phrases that have identical correspondences in the other gospels.

As in the first section, there appears to be a closer relationship between Mark and Matthew than between Mark and Luke. Listed below are some of the key verbal parallels

1. Mark 6:7 "εδιδου αυτοις εξουσιαν των πνευματων των ακαθαρτων"

While this phrase does not match Matthew 10:1 word for word, there is significant similarity.

2. Mark 6:8-9

"εις οδον...ραβδον...αρτον...πηραν...ζωνην χαλκον...δου χιτωνασ" Matthew 10:9-10 and Luke 9:3 contain many of the same words related to what the disciples were to take on their journeys.

3. Mark 6:10-11 Matthew 10:11-14, and Luke 9:4-5 do not correspond word for word, but there are many parallels. The flow of thought is virtually the same in all three Synoptics.

Statistics

Mark 6:1-6a

Percentage of words used that are common to the other gospels:

In Matthew: 73/128 57%

In Mark: 73/123 59%

Mark 6:6b-13

Percentage of words used that are common to the other gospels:

In Matthew: 32/143 22%

In Mark: 32/117 27%

In Luke: 17/90 19%