

Article

A Post-Supersessionist Reading of the Temple and Torah in Mark's Gospel: The Parable of the Vineyard

Vered Hillel

Jewish Studies and Rabbinic Studies Faculty, Messianic Jewish Theological Institute,
San Diego, CA 92192-8004, USA; drvered@mjt.org

Abstract: Most interpretations of the Temple and Torah in the Gospel of Mark have held a negative view toward the Jewish institutions, declaring that the old has been replaced by the new, meaning Jesus is the new Temple and the Church has replaced the Jewish people. This article presents a post-supersessionist reading of the Temple and Torah in Mark's Gospel, focusing on the Parable of the Vineyard (Mk 12:1–12) in the broader narrative context (11:1–13:1) and the canonical narrative, thereby maintaining the Gospel's connection with the Jewish people and their covenant relationship with God. These two contexts frame the parable and set parameters for its interpretation, thereby preventing anti-Torah and anti-Temple interpretations and the theological belief that Christians are Abraham's true and rightful heirs.

Keywords: Mark 11–12; Temple; Torah; priesthood; Jewish leaders; post-supersessionism; fig tree; prayer; authority; intercalation; Church

1. Introduction

From Wrede (1971) to Juel (1977), Telford (1980) to Waetjen (1989), and Evans (1989) to Gray (2010),¹ scholars have commonly depicted Mark's Gospel as anti-Torah and anti-Temple, concluding that the new—the Church and its institutions—replaced the old—the Jewish people, the Torah, and the Temple.² Such interpretations are supersessionist. Any interpretation that “claims or implies the abrogation or obsolescence of God's covenant with the Jewish people” is supersessionist (Soulen 2005b, p. 413). More recently, post-supersessionist interpretations of these themes have arisen that retain the continued validity of *ADONAI*'s covenant with Israel “as a coherent and indispensable part of the larger body of Christian teaching” (Soulen 2005a, p. 350).³ Three authors who address the two pillars of 2nd Temple Judaism, the Temple and the Torah, from a post-supersessionist view are Regev (2010, 2019), Watts Henderson (2018) and van Maaren (2017). Van Maaren explains that neither the replacement of the Temple or the priesthood nor the cessation of the sacrificial system is explicitly stated in Mark; instead, they are assumed at the narrative level (Van Maaren 2019, pp. 290–316). Regev purports that Jesus makes a positive use of the Temple setting to establish his authority (Regev 2019, p. 126), and Watts Henderson concludes that Mark's Gospel presents a complex and nuanced view of the Torah and Temple (Watts Henderson 2018, p. 163).

Similarly to the approaches of Van Maaren, Regev, and Watts Henderson, this article presents a post-supersessionist reading of the Torah and Temple in Mark, briefly addressing incidents demonstrating Jesus' attitude toward these two pillars, followed by a look at the Parable of the Vineyard (Mk 12:1–12) as an example. Although the Temple plays an essential role in the closing scenes of Mark's Gospel (chaps. 11–15), its function, which must be gleaned from the narrative, has been extensively debated. The enigmatic character of the Parable of the Vineyard compounds the issues.⁴ This article makes no attempt to refute the numerous interpretations of the Parable of the Vineyard, investigate the historical or



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redactional difficulties of the text, or provide a detailed exegesis. Instead, the parable is situated in its contextual pericope (11:1–13:1) and broader Markan narrative and anchored in the canonical narrative retaining the continuity with the Tanakh (Old Testament) and the People of Israel.

Three primary methodologies are used: (1) historical and contextual location to identify the communal identities, traditions, and practices of the author and the implied readers;⁵ (2) narrative criticism to understand the literary context of Mark's Gospel and intra-relationships of its components; (3) a "hermeneutic of dialectical ecclesial continuity" in which Messianic Jews, "as part of the Jewish community with its tradition of interpretation, and as a partner to the Christian community with its tradition of interpretation" can draw from both communities to hear what each has said in the past and hear new things that "their mutual and unnatural isolation have prevented them from hearing" (Kinzer 2010, p. 33). I also distinguish between criticism of the Temple and the rejection of it because criticism can be a life-giving reproof (Prov 15:31) that disciplines, leading to righteousness and peace (Heb 12:11), and between condemnation as judgment, which can lead to repentance and restoration (Dt 30:1–10).

2. Jesus' Attitude in Mark toward the Torah and Temple

Unlike Matthew, Luke and John, which begin with birth stories and genealogies (Mt 1:1–2:12 and Lk 1:5–2:21; 3:23–38) or the pre-existent Word of God (Jn 1:1–14), Mark's Gospel begins in medias res, placing it in the middle of the canonical narrative, which begins at creation and looks to a future eschatological kingdom of God.⁶ Jesus proclaims and initiates this eschatological kingdom (Mk 1:14–15; 14:22–26) through his teachings (Mk 4:30; 10:17–26) and actions (10:46–52).⁷ The conflation of three verses attributed to Isaiah (Ex 23:20, Mal 3:1, and Is 40:3 [Mk 1:1–3])⁸ connects back to the Tanakh and the story of Israel and forward to the future eschatological kingdom of David established by Jesus (cf. Mark 11:1–10). Throughout the Gospel, the author draws on texts from the Tanakh to establish continuity with Israel's past and connect God's actions in Israelite history with the events in the life of Jesus. These citations and direct or indirect references are not intended to replace the original verses in the Tanakh but to remind the audience of their source and, therefore, the context and background of their use in the gospel. Attributing the verses to Isaiah firmly places the Gospel in Isaiah's conceptual matrix, establishes its eschatological tenor (See, Marcus 1992, pp. 17–23; Hays 2016, p. 201), and alludes to two of Mark's dialectical themes—eschatological deliverance and restoration, and eschatological judgment. Similarly, instead of the word νόμος (law; Hebrew תורה), which, in contrast to Matthew, Luke, and John, is not present in Mark's Gospel, the author relies on related terms and events in the narrative to connect to the Tanakh (Van Maaren 2019, pp. 298–99, nn. 267–68).

Another foundational aspect is the issue of Jesus' authority, especially as a point of contention with Jewish leaders, which runs throughout Mark from the narrator's comment that Jesus teaches "with authority" (1:21–22) to the confrontation of the chief priests, scribes and elders, who ask "By what authority?" and "who gave you this authority" (11:28).⁹ Mark differentiates between power (δυνάμει) and authority (ἐξουσία); power relates to Jesus' ability to heal (e.g., 1:23–28; 2:1–12; 5:1–20) and perform exorcisms (e.g., 1:23–28; 1:29–2:12; 3:1–6; 5:1–20, 22–43) and authority relates to the source of his right to carry out deeds of power (6:2; cf. 11:28), teach (e.g., 1:22, 27) and interpret Scripture (e.g., 1:16; 2:18, 23–24, 3:16 102; 12:14). This usage is exemplified in Jesus' first encounter with the scribes (2:1–12). The scribes question who has the power (δυνάμει) to forgive sins (v. 7), and Jesus clarifies that the Son of Man has the authority (ἐξουσία) on Earth to forgive sins (Edwards 1994). The scribes also challenge the source of Jesus' power to heal when they attribute it to Beelzebul, the ruler of demons (3:22). The Pharisees, along with the scribes, confront Jesus about his authority to interpret the Scripture by questioning his actions and teachings (eating with tax collectors and sinners 2:15–17; on fasting 2:18–22, Shabbat 2:23–28; 3:1–6, divorce 10:2 and taxes 12:13). The most explicit confrontation of Jesus' authority is in 11:27–28,

where the Jerusalem leaders query him concerning the authority through which he performs “these things.” The immediate context points to his actions in the Temple the day before (11:15–19). However, this is only the most recent provocative incident. In the broader Markan narrative, the question refers to all the previous things he has carried out. The question also indicates that the issue is not simply about what Jesus did but his right to do what he did. The second question explicitly enquires about the source of his authority, which also relates to earlier challenges (2:7).

2.1. Examples of Jesus’ Affirmative Posture toward the Torah and Temple

Mark depicts Jesus as having a positive attitude toward the Torah in his interactions with the rich man (10:17–30) and a scribe (12:28–34). Both episodes associate obedience to God with the observance of the Torah. The rich man asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus responded with the commandments from the second tablet of the Decalogue, which the rich man confessed he had carried out since his youth. Jesus looked at the man and loved him (v. 21). Jesus’ reply invoking the commandments upholds the Jewish belief that obedience to the Torah in the manner God intended, through covenantal relationship and *hesed* (חסד; steadfast love, covenantal faithfulness, loyalty or grace), would result in eternal life.¹⁰ Jesus points out that the rich man did not keep the Torah as “intended”; he loved his wealth more than he loved God. He chose not to “sell everything” and follow Jesus. Throughout the encounter, Jesus did not disparage the Torah or the rich man for following Torah; he expanded the Kingdom of God by calling the man to follow him.

In the second episode, a scribe approached Jesus and asked which commandment was first (12:28–34). Jesus replied with the double love command to love God (Dt 6:4–5) and one’s neighbor (Lv 19:18). In the time of Jesus, the commands to love God and one’s neighbor were commonly recognized as a summation of the entire Torah: the first governing relations between humans and God, and the second relationships among humans.¹¹ Those who obeyed the first five commandments were “lovers of God,” and those who obeyed the final five were “lovers of people.” Thus, the double love command (Dt 6:5 and Lv 19:18) epitomized these two divisions and obedience to the Torah.¹² The scribe affirmed Jesus’ answer, adding that these commandments were more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices (cf. Hos 6:6 LXX or 1 Sam 15:22 LXX). The scribe’s additional statement does not necessarily indicate that the sacrifices should be abolished. The cross-references to Hosea and 1 Samuel suggest that obedience to Torah should be carried out without neglecting the sacrificial system. Fulfilling the sacrificial system did not negate obedience to the other aspects of the Torah. In this episode, Mark depicts Jesus affirming the Torah.

The first mention of the priesthood in Mark (1:40–44) demonstrates Jesus’ view toward the priesthood and the sacrificial and Levitical purity systems. A leper approached Jesus, asking to be made clean.¹³ Jesus touched the man and commanded him to be clean, and the leprosy left him. Immediately, Jesus sent the man away, sternly warning him not to say anything to anyone but to show himself to the priests as required by the Torah (lit. that Moses commanded; Lv 14:1–3). Only a priest could declare a person healed of skin disease ritually clean after they had completed the required purification process (Lv 14:1–31).¹⁴ Jesus’ instructions for the leper to show himself to the priest indicate Jesus’ respect for the sacrificial and Levitical purity systems and that he functioned within them (e.g., [Marcus 2000](#), p. 210).

2.2. Handwashing and Traditions of the Elders (Mk 7:1–23)

One of the most well-known events in Mark concerning Jesus’ view toward the Torah is the Pharisees’ confrontation with Jesus about ritual handwashing (7:1–23). In the Second Temple Period, handwashing before meals was widespread but not universally accepted, nor did it follow the same regulations.¹⁵ The Tanakh requires that holy food (e.g., heave and fellowship offerings and portions of sin offerings (Lv 7:19–21; 21:1–8; Nu 18:8–19) be eaten in a state of priestly purity. Nevertheless, the concept of “non-priestly purity” or

“common holiness” was also prevalent, encompassing handwashing before meals, prayer and Torah reading.¹⁶ Non-priestly purity is based on the Levitical purity system but was not uniform due to different interpretations. Mark demonstrates that he and Jesus understood the Jewish practice of his time by noting that “all Jews” (v. 3) ceremonially washed hands before eating.¹⁷ However, Mark focuses the discussion (7:1–12) on the Pharisees’ strict interpretation of the Torah according to the “traditions of the elders”¹⁸ and Jesus’ interpretation. Jesus’ rebuke of the Pharisees for forsaking the commandments of God instead of the traditions of men (v. 8) undergirds this notion. In this, Mark delineates the two main issues of the pericope (7:1–23), defilement and the interpretation of the Torah, for the proper understanding and application of Levitical purity laws. Jesus’ words to the crowd (v. 15) exemplify this point: “There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile, but the things that come out of him are what defile.” According to the Torah, it is not what goes into the body that makes it impure but what comes out of it—menstrual blood and semen, though not excrement. The Pharisees seem to have interpreted the biblical system more strictly, rendering a ruling that eating defiled food makes the eater impure (Boyarin 2012, p. 115). Most remarkable, however, is Jesus’ interest in debating the issue of purity in the first place. Instead of dismissing the matter as unimportant, he assumes that the purity laws hold some relevance through his rejection of the Pharisees’ interpretation of them, implying a positive view toward the purity system and the Torah (Boyarin 2012, pp. 102–28).

The Levitical purity system is complex. It delineates distinct types of impurity (moral and ritual) that are interrelated and use the same vocabulary.¹⁹ Though the language is the same, food impurity is not the same as moral or ritual purity and is better categorized as permitted and prohibited according to Lv 11 and Dt 14:3–21 (Klawans 2000, pp. 31–32; Boyarin 2012, pp. 112–14; Thiessen 2020, pp. 187–95).²⁰ Thus, in his private teaching to his disciples (vv. 17–23), Jesus contrasts permitted food, which goes into and out of the body without defiling, with immoral acts that flow from the heart outward, causing defilement. Jesus’ list of immoral acts that defile a person corresponds well to sins generally accepted as sources of moral defilement (Klawans 2000, p. 148). Yet, it also includes other grave sins that defile. Often, this verse is interpreted as Jesus’ emphasis on moral purity over ritual purity. In contrast, Van Maaren notes that these verses do not juxtapose ritual and moral impurity (Van Maaren 2019, p. 311).²¹ Instead, they are representative of impurities that include grave sins that defile.²² In this context, Mark’s parenthetical statement, “Thus he declared all foods clean” (v. 19), is better understood as “he purified all foods,” showing that Jesus rejected the extra-stringent interpretation of defiled foods held by the Pharisees. The two issues of defilement and interpretation of the Torah are a thread through the pericope rendering the conclusion that Mark’s Jesus does not reject the Levitical purity system but assumes it, “while contrasting his understanding of purity with that of the Pharisees and scribes” (Van Maaren 2019, p. 307). The confrontation also demonstrates the prominent 2nd Temple period controversy over who has the authority to interpret the Torah correctly for daily life. The issue was orthopraxy, not orthodoxy.

The above examples are not exhaustive in their exposition or representation of Mark’s view of the Temple or Torah. However, they testify on the narrative level to Mark’s presentation of Jesus as honoring, respecting, and participating in the Torah commandments, the purity and dietary systems and the Temple with its sacrificial system and priesthood.²³

3. The Parable of the Vineyard

The Parable of the Vineyard is one of the most challenging and enigmatic parables in the Synoptic Gospels (Mt 20:1–16; Mk 12:1–12; Lk 20:9–19; cf. Gospel of Thomas 65–66),²⁴ with a myriad of interpretations utilizing sundry methodologies generally asserting that Jesus and the Church have replaced the Jewish People and the Temple with its system of worship.²⁵ The following analysis of the parable heeds the admonitions of Drury (1985, pp. 1–3) and Gerhardsson (1991) on the importance of maintaining parables in their imme-

diate narrative and broader book context. Gerhardsson explains that parables (narrative *meshalim* in his terminology)²⁶ separated from their context are naked and wild texts with endless interpretations (Gerhardsson 1991, pp. 322, 325 and 335).

The narrative context of the Parable of the Vineyard in Mark is crucial due to its strategic arrangement through typical Markan techniques of intercalation (sandwich technique; Edwards 1989) and Scriptural allusions that create an interpretive framework. For instance, the insertion of the Temple confrontation (11:15–19) between the “cursing” and withering of the fig tree (11:12–14, 20–25) creates a Markan sandwich that connects the two events. The allusion to Psalm 118:25–26 at the triumphal entry (11:1–11) and the quote of Psalm 118:22–23 at the end of the Parable of the Vineyard (12:10–11) frame the intercalated inner story of the fig tree and cleansing of the Temple, grouping the events. Thus, one’s interpretation of the cleansing of the Temple and the unfruitful fig tree becomes the interpretive key for the Parable of the Vineyard. An understanding of the unfruitful fig tree as a portent of the destruction of the Temple and the sacrificial system engenders the conclusion that Jesus has replaced the Temple and the Church has replaced the Jewish people.²⁷ In a snowball effect, the interpretive key, strengthened by the interpretation of the Parable of the Vineyard, influences the interpretation of the Last Supper as the launch of a new Temple in which bread replaces animal sacrifice (Theissen and Merz 1996, pp. 432–36; Chilton 1992, pp. 150–54), and Jesus’ death and resurrection are placed as the establishment of the Church as the new Temple (Wardle 2010, p. 223 n. 207). The following analysis of the narrative context presents a contrasting interpretive key.

3.1. Broader Narrative Context 11:1–13:1

The Parable of the Vineyard is woven into the end of Jesus’ journey from Galilee to Jerusalem. The narrative context of the parable (11:1–13:1) covers a three-day sequence of events that occurred in or around the Temple: Jesus’ triumphal entry and first visit to the Temple (11:1–11); the “cursing” of the fig tree, and the Temple confrontation (11:12–19); the withering of the fig tree, and Jesus’ teaching in the Temple (11:20–13:1).

Mark sets the stage for Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem and the Temple through the healing of Bartimaeus (10:46–52). Twice Bartimaeus called Jesus the Son of David (10:47, 48).²⁸ Although these verses are the only explicit use in Mark’s gospel of the title Son of David, the concept is strewn throughout the Gospel. The underlying idea of the messiahship of the Son of David is expressed in 11:9–10, and Jesus briefly discusses its messianic import in 12:35–37 (cf. Pss Sol. 17:24, 35–37). In 12:35–37, Jesus responds to his interlocutors with two questions about the Son of David based on Ps 110:1 (LXX 109:1). The use of the word *πῶς* supports an interpretation of Jesus’ question as rhetorical, leading to the conclusion that the interpretation of the scribes was incorrect; thus, Jesus is the Son of David (e.g., Yarbro Collins 2007, pp. 577–81). The appeal to David’s authority in 2:25 can be read as an implicit reference to Jesus’ authority, as his actions coincide with the messianic expectations of the Son of David.²⁹ Mark’s placement of the title on the lips of Bartimaeus introduces “Jesus’ Son of David activity” (Smith 1996). It raises the readers’ messianic expectations in anticipation of Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem and the Temple.

Approaching Jerusalem, the crowd welcomed Jesus as a king, proclaiming him the one coming in the name of *ADONAI* (alluding to Ps 118:25–26) and initiating the kingdom of David (cf. 10:47–48). Jesus’ entry resembles the ceremonial entrances of kings into the city (Catchpole 1984), e.g., Solomon (1 Kgs 1:32–40) and the future eschatological king (Zec 9:9).³⁰ The parallels with Solomon and the eschatological king, along with reference to Psalm 118, reverberate with messianic expectations, and on the narrative level, imbue the crowd, and the reader, with the anticipation that Jesus would be installed as king upon his arrival in Jerusalem. However, upon entering the Temple, nothing happened; the leaders were silent. Jesus looked around and left. The contrasting silence of the leaders and the crowd’s reception establishes a narrative tension between the two groups that continues to build until Jesus leaves the Temple for the last time (13:1).

Jesus' return to the Temple the following day continues the Markan theme of contention between the Jewish leaders and the question of authority to interpret the Torah correctly. On the way to the Temple from Bethany, Jesus saw a fig tree in the distance. Being hungry, he approached the tree looking for figs but found none because it was not the season (*καιρός*) of figs (11:13). Jesus addressed the tree, saying, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again" (11:14). While Jesus' statement is generally understood as a curse, it could also be an imprecatory prayer (cf. Acts 8:20; Jude 9), which is a prayer that invokes judgment, calamity, or curses as in Ps 35:6, 58:6 and 69:22–25 (Wallace 1996, p. 482, n. 88; cf. Wahlen 2007, pp. 250–53). As an imprecatory prayer, Jesus' words function as a harbinger of his teaching on prayer and faith after the disciples spot the withered fig tree the following day. This is not to say that Mark's audience would have substantially differentiated between a curse, magic and a negative prayer. In the Tanakh and New Testament, magic is determined by the perceived power through which the action is performed (Ricks 2001, esp. p. 143).³¹ Mark has already established that Jesus' authority was from God (2:1–12). Thus, Jesus' actions, as the Son of David and anticipated messiah, would not be considered magic. Furthermore, for biblical writers, the difference between a prayer and a curse is the expected outcome rather than the formulation. The connection between Jesus' words spoken to the fig tree and his teaching on prayer upon seeing the results corroborate the interpretation of his words as an imprecatory prayer.

Jesus' hunger and fruitless search for figs are analogous to Micah's simile (Mi 7:1) of a hungry person searching for a cluster of grapes and early figs to show that searching for the godly in Jerusalem (v. 2) was akin to looking for summer fruit after the harvest had ended (v. 1). In the Markan context, Micah 7:1 is reminiscent of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem (11:1–11) in that upon his entry into the Temple, he looked around but found no fruit and left (11:11). Though the crowds hailed him as the coming king, Mark presents the Temple leadership as silent. In contrast to the crowds, the Temple leadership did not welcome Jesus into the city as a king was traditionally welcomed (Catchpole 1984, pp. 319–24). In this analogy, the "leaves" on the fig tree can correspond to the crowd's acclamations and reception and the absence of fruit to the leaders' silence and lack of welcome (Yarbrow Collins 2007, pp. 525–26).

The tree having leaves but no fruit because "it was not the season (*καιρός*) of figs" (11:13) reflects the timing of the arrival of the kingdom of God as proclaimed at the beginning of Jesus' ministry (1:15): "The time (*καιρός*) is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near." The eschatological tone of the prologue (1:1–13), coupled with the verb usage, provides the context for understanding Jesus' proclamation as the prophetic hope for messianic deliverance has arrived and the time (*καιρός*) for the kingdom of God is about to be realized.³² From this perspective, the tree having leaves but no fruit illustrates the idea of already but not yet. The messianic hope was already here; however, it was not yet the time (*καιρός*) for the complete fulfillment of the Kingdom of God. The crowd anticipated a messianic king who would restore the physical kingdom of David; however, the timing and interpretation of their expectations were flawed. Jesus was the coming king, but the time of his enthronement and rule as the eschatological messianic king and Son of David was not yet; he still had to suffer, die, rise from the dead and be exalted as the Son of Man (8:31, 38; 9:9, 31; 10:33; 13:26; 14:62). In answer to the disciples' question about the timing of eschatological events and the coming of the Son of Man (13:4, 24–27), Jesus instructed them to learn from the fig tree. When it blossoms in season (*καιρός*), the eschatological king is near, at the door (13:28–31). The time of messianic deliverance had come in Jesus; however, it was not yet the time (*καιρός*) for the fulfillment of the fulness of God's kingdom.

The narrative tension continued to rise as Jesus entered the Temple and expelled those selling and buying, overturned the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves and prohibited people from carrying objects through the Temple precincts (vv. 15–16); they were improper uses of the Temple, as indicated in his teaching that follows. The people were amazed at his teaching; however, the leaders became indignant. Standing in the court of the Gentiles, Jesus declared, "my house shall be called a house of prayer

for all nations (Is 56:7), but you have made it a den of robbers” (an allusion to Jer 7:11).³³ Notice that Jesus did not repudiate the Temple. He called the Temple “my house” and returned the next day to teach there (11:27–12:44). Jesus’ actions were a criticism of the Temple leadership and how the Temple was being used, but not a rejection of the Temple.³⁴ As the prophets of old, Jesus’ actions and words corrected the Temple leadership. Additionally, his words began the transformation and sanctification of the Temple courts into a place of prayer for both Jews and Gentiles, the nations (Noonan Sabin 2002, p. 79; Yarbrow Collins 2007, pp. 530–31). The scribes and chief priests were so incensed with Jesus’ challenge of their authority in the Temple precinct that they conspired as to how they might destroy (assassinate) him (11:17–18). However, they took no action out of fear for the people. In Mark’s narrative, this is Jesus’ first encounter with the chief priests. Throughout the narrative, the scribes consistently question Jesus directly or through his disciples (2:6, 16; 3:22; 7:1, 5; 9:14; 11:18, 27; 12:28, 32; 14:1); however, the chief priests did not challenge Jesus until he entered the Temple where they had authority. On the narrative level, their dispute with Jesus about his authority progressively escalates until it climaxes in 14:53 and 15:1. The narrative tension continues to intensify on the two tracks, between the leaders and the crowd, and over authority.

On the way to the Temple the following day, the disciples saw the fig tree withered from its roots. Jesus, responding to Peter’s astonishment at the sight, taught about faith and prayer (11:23–25). Based on the above interpretation of the leaves of the fig tree, the tree’s withered leaves anticipate the leaders’ rebellious behavior depicted in the Parable of the Vineyard (12:1–12; cf. Is 1:30). The tenants, similarly to the Temple leadership, were corrupt and needed to be replaced, not the Temple and its systems. The fig tree episode and the cleansing of the Temple criticize the Jewish leaders, not the Temple and its institutions or Israel as a people. Judgment was imminent, but judgment was intended to bring repentance leading to restoration, not replacement of the covenantal institutions (Dt 30:1–10). Upon entering the Temple, the chief priests, scribes, and elders began questioning Jesus about his authority (11:27–28). Instead of answering, Jesus asked the leaders about the source of John’s authority. Feigning ignorance out of fear of the crowd, the leaders again remained silent. In response, Jesus told the Parable of the Vineyard.³⁵ The chief priests, scribes and elders understood that the parable was spoken about them (12:12) and wanted to arrest Jesus; however, their fear of the crowd once again stopped them from acting. The Jewish leaders persisted in inquiring about the source of Jesus’ authority. They sent others to test him: Pharisees and Herodians (12:13–17), Sadducees (12:18–27), and a scribe (12:28–34). After the scribe’s query, the Jewish leaders stopped directly confronting Jesus, who continued teaching until he departed the Temple for the last time (13:1).

3.2. *Parable of the Vineyard*

The above reading of the narrative context serves as the interpretive key of the Parable of the Vineyard. The narrative tension between the leaders and the crowds becomes secondary, and the issue of authority comes to the forefront: who has authority over the vineyard, the owner or the tenants? The imagery of the parable and the leaders’ reaction to the parable (12:12) indicate that the vineyard owner has authority over the vineyard and the tenants. Though the parable foresees a leadership change, the vineyard and its owner remain the same.

The Parable of the Vineyard in Mark echoes the Song of the Vineyard in Isaiah 5:1–7, with distinct Markan adaptations.³⁶ In the Song (Is 5:1–7), God prepared the soil, planted choice vines, built a tower, dug a wine vat and lovingly cared for his vineyard, which is explicitly identified as the house of Israel and the vine as the people of Judah (v. 7).³⁷ Despite such loving care, the vineyard only produced wild (sour) grapes (5:2, 4). After searching for justice and righteousness but finding only bloodshed and outcry, God removed the vineyard’s protecting wall and withheld rain, allowing the vineyard to become a wasteland filled with thorns and briars where wild animals roamed. In Mark’s parable, an unidentified man built a vineyard, a fence, a tower, and a wine vat, leased the vine-

yard to tenant vinedressers, and departed. The owner's departure, the introduction of the tenant vinedressers (v. 1) and the slaves (servants) sent to collect the owner's portion of the harvest (vv. 2–5) dramatically alter the situation addressed by Mark's parable from Isaiah's song. In Isaiah 5, God judged the vineyard (Israel) for their disobedience to the Torah, whereas in Mark's parable, nothing is spoken against the vineyard. Instead, the vineyard produced a bountiful crop. Judgment fell on the tenants, who behaved violently and rebelliously.

The tenants beat the first slave and sent him away empty-handed, struck the second on the head, and killed the third. All the other dispatched slaves were beaten or killed. The narrative tension rises with the violent treatment of each slave, until they kill the owner's one dear son (*ἀγαπητός*), whom he thought they would respect.³⁸ The haughty tenants tried to usurp the authority of the vineyard owner. At this point, Jesus asked the rhetorical question, "What will the owner of the vineyard do?" (cf. Is 5:4). He will come and declare judgment on the tenants. The owner's return, which is the climax of the parable, is reminiscent of the kingdom of God that has come in power (9:1) as both involve judgment (12:9). The current tenants, not the vineyard, would be destroyed, and its care would be given to others.

Mark explicitly identifies the tenants as the Jewish leaders (12:12), who, in the immediate context, are the chief priests, scribes, and elders (12:1, 12), Pharisees and Herodians (12:13; cf. 3:6), and Sadducees (12:18). In the broader biblical context, the owner's representatives correspond to the prophets of Israel who were *ADONAI*'s representatives (cf. Jer 7:25–26). The tenants' actions escalated from abusing the owner's representatives and refusing to give him what he was owed to killing the owner's beloved son and tossing his body out of the vineyard where the corpse was exposed to wild animals and the forces of nature. The death of the owner's one dear son recognizably corresponds to the death of Jesus, as he predicted his death (8:31; 9:31; 10:33), the leaders' involvement in it (8:31; 10:33; 14:1) and their collusion to kill him (3:6; 11:18; 14:1; cf. 12:12). However, the parallels between the owner's son and Jesus stop at the son's death. Jesus was crucified outside the city, and his body was laid in a grave. The treatment of the son's body in the parable reflects the callous and rebellious attitude of the tenants, revealing their scandalous contempt for the owner and his beloved son.

Similarly to the divine speaker in Isaiah 5:4–5, Jesus both asked and answered the rhetorical question (12:9). Unlike Isaiah, where the protecting wall is removed, allowing the vineyard to become a wasteland, Mark's parable takes a shocking turn: the tenant vinedressers are put to death (12:9), and the vineyard is given to the care of others. The parable does not conclude as expected; Israel is not turned over to the nations as in Amos 5:16–18, Isaiah 47:6 or Jeremiah 2:29–37, nor is the vineyard (Israel) destroyed as in Isaiah 5:5 (cf. Is 5:18–26). The vineyard parable surprises and challenges the audience while shaking up and indicting the Jewish leaders.

The "others" to whom the care of the vineyard will be given are not explicitly stated in the text. It is unlikely that "others" refers to Gentile leadership in the church because, during Mark's time, the leadership of the Church was, for the most part, still Jewish.³⁹ However, in the broader narrative context of Mark's Gospel, the "others" can point to the expansion of the eschatological kingdom of God to include Gentiles (cf. 5:18; 7:24–30, 31–37; 8:1–9, 22–26; 9:14–29; Iverson 2012, esp. p. 334).⁴⁰ Such expansion does not indicate replacement but transformation and sanctification of the Temple, which corresponds explicitly to Jesus' passing on some of his authority to the twelve when he sent them out two by two (6:7) and implicitly to them in his teaching on prayer at the withered fig tree (11:23–25).

The position of the quotation of Psalms 11:22–23 (117 LXX) at the end of the Parable of the Vineyard anticipates the eventual judgment of the Jewish leaders for their rejection of the "stone the builders rejected" that became the cornerstone or keystone at the top of an arch (Marcus 2009, pp. 808–9). This metaphor of reversal (the rejected becomes the keystone) may be a pun on *הבונים* (the builders) from the root *בנה* and on *בנים* (the thinkers

or wise) from the root *בָּן*.⁴¹ The latter fits the scribes as teachers of the Torah. Another play on words in Hebrew is *בֵּן* (*bēn*; son) and *עֵבֶן* (*even*; stone). In rejecting the (corner)stone, the Jewish leaders (the caretakers of the vineyard) placed an indictment on themselves that confirmed their guilt as the rebellious tenants (Stern 1994, p. 67). The marvelous element mentioned in Psalm 118:23 (117 LXX) is the miraculous rescue of a person surrounded by enemies and near death. This rescue is an example of divine reversal wrought by the power of God. A similar divine reversal occurs in Mark; Jesus' status changed from rejection and shameful treatment to the cornerstone, the exalted Son of Man.

Jesus' teaching, especially the parable, infuriated the Jewish leaders as Jeremiah's message of *ADONAI*'s impending judgment on the leaders, the Temple, and the city infuriated the priests and prophets of his day had (Jer 26:6–7, 11–15). As in Mark, the leaders in Jeremiah were judged for their lack of care for the people (Jer 23:1–2). However, *ADONAI*'s judgment was meant as discipline, not rejection, because restoration was promised (Jer 26:13). *ADONAI* promised to regather and restore Israel under the rule of a righteous branch, a descendant of David, whom Mark presents as Jesus. The broader context of Isaiah reveals the same theological thought. *ADONAI* disciplined Israel for their sin as he warned (Dt 11:16–17, 28:15–46) but restored Israel as promised after repenting their disobedience (Dt 30:1–10). *ADONAI* promised to reverse the vineyard's previous status of judgment and exile (Is 27:2–9) and make it a pleasant vineyard that fills the world with its fruit (27:6; cf. Is 65:21).⁴² Thus, Israel's chastisement does not indicate *ADONAI*'s rejection or replacement but alludes to eschatological reversal akin to Jesus' actions and teaching in the Gospel of Mark.

The same theology is seen in the Aramaic Targum of Isaiah (Chilton 1987, xiv–xviii).⁴³ The Song of the Vineyard in the Isaiah Targum only expresses a portion of the document's theology. When nested in the Targum's broader theological context, a more exhaustive reading emerges; just as Israel's apostasy engendered judgment and punishment resulting in exile, repentance brings restoration according to *ADONAI*'s promises (Hillel 2023). Parallels have been drawn between Targum Isaiah 5 and 4Q500⁴⁴ to demonstrate that the fence, tower, and wine vat in Mark's Parable of the Vineyard refer to the Temple, engendering an interpretation that Israel and the Temple have been destroyed and replaced by Jesus and the church.⁴⁵ Such an interpretation is called into question by the very fragmented state of 4Q500 and its theme of the ideal temple, and by the addressees and main issues of the Song in Isaiah Targum, where Israel is judged for their sin and the vineyard destroyed, and the Targum's theological context. Furthermore, such parallels are unnecessary as Jesus' physical presence in the Temple precincts and conversations with the Temple leaders establish the parable's connection with the Temple. In Mark, the parable implicitly and explicitly applies to the Jewish leadership.

Summation of the Parable of the Vineyard

Reading the Parable of the Vineyard in its narrative framework (Mk 11:1–13:1) shows that the parable is about judgment on the Jewish leaders and divine reversals. The vineyard received new leadership; otherwise, however, it remained the same. From the triumphal entry (11:1–11) to the vineyard parable (12:1–12), Mark contrasts the crowds' reaction to that of the Jewish leaders and their confrontations with Jesus over his authority to carry out and teach what he does. This passage demonstrates well that Mark's fast-paced narrative is an interwoven tapestry comprising "multiple overlapping structures and sequences, forecasts of what is to come and echoes of what has already been said" (Dewey 1991, p. 224). The critical question in the parable is, "who has authority over the vineyard, the owner or the tenants?" When read in its Markan narrative and canonical narrative context, the answer is "the owner." He, *ADONAI*, has the authority to choose those in authority over the vineyard. However, when excised from these parameters, the parable becomes a wild text that allows diverse, supersessionist interpretations that range from anti-Torah and anti-Temple sentiments to the Church's replacement of Israel.

4. Conclusions

In this article, I have presented a post-supersessionist reading of the Temple and Torah in the Gospel of Mark, using the Parable of the Vineyard as an example. This analysis has demonstrated that both Mark and Mark's Jesus respect and honor and participate in the Temple, its priesthood and sacrificial system, and the Mosaic Covenant (Torah). Jesus criticizes the Temple but does not reject it; he criticizes and judges the leaders, which results in their replacement. Jesus's healing of the leper and command to show himself to the priests (1:40–44) exemplify the positive attitude of Mark and Mark's Jesus toward the priesthood and sacrificial system. Jesus affirms the value of the Torah and the commandments in conversations with a rich man and a scribe: he loved the rich man because he kept the commandments (10:18–19) and answered the scribe's inquiry about the greatest commandment with the Shema (Dt 6:4) and the double love command to love God and one's neighbor (Dt 6:5; Lv 19:19). Moreover, Jesus' actions and words testify to his concern and respect for the physical Temple as a functioning institution and as an abstract symbol of Judaism at that time. His direct participation in the Temple, as seen in the narrative context of the Parable of the Vineyard, reinforces this respect and concern. The brief look at Jesus' confrontation with the Pharisees over ritual handwashing reveals that Jesus and his disciples upheld the validity of the Torah's purity and dietary laws, though not as interpreted by the Pharisees and scribes.

Examining the Parable of the Vineyard demonstrates the importance of reading passages in their broader Markan narrative context and the canonical narrative to keep Mark's gospel firmly embedded in the biblical story that flows from creation through God's relationship with Israel to consummation. The broader narrative context of the vineyard parable establishes the interpretive key for the parable and sets the narrative's tone and pace. Each of the events and their narrative order—the triumphal entry, the “cursing” of the fig tree, the Temple confrontation, and the withering of the fig tree—establish the narrative tension between the crowd and the leaders, the timing of the fulfillment of the crowd's messianic expectations, and the Jewish leaders' struggle with Jesus' authority. The narrative climaxes in the Parable of the Vineyard, which portrays the judgment of the current Jewish leadership and the removal of their authority and care of the vineyard, which is given to others. The identity of the “others” is not stated in the parable. However, the broader context of Mark's Gospel and Jesus' proclamation that his house will be called a house of prayer for all nations point to the expanded eschatological kingdom that includes Gentile Jesus believers.

The theology of Isaiah (cf. Targum Isaiah) and God's treatment of leaders in Jeremiah support the conclusion that Jesus' criticism and judgment of the Jewish leaders did not indicate the permanent rejection or destruction of the priesthood or the Temple. God's judgment was to bring repentance and restoration. God promised Isaiah to reverse the vineyard's previous status and make it fruitful. This is a divine reversal. In Mark, a divine reversal occurs when Jesus' status changes from rejection and shame to the cornerstone the builders rejected. The reading of the Gospel of Mark presented in this article demonstrates a post-supersessionist interpretation of the Temple and Torah that maintains the continued validity of *ADONAI*'s covenant with Israel and its institutions as an integral part of the teaching of Jesus and the *ekklesia*.

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Notes

- ¹ Extreme emphasis on Christology (Wrede 1971; cf. Räisänen 1990); Jesus as the new Temple (Juel 1977); Eschatological judgment of the Temple (Telford 1980); Abolition of the Temple (Waetjen 1989); Anti-Temple and -priesthood (Evans 1989); Jesus as a new type of priest, thus replacing the Temple (Gray 2010).
- ² E.g., (Chance 2007; Snow 2016, esp. pp. 115–22, 167–69; Joseph 2016, p. 166) and examples given in (Regev 2010, pp. 139–59, esp. pp. 139–40 and nn. 2–8; 2019, pp. 96–97 and nn. 1–5).
- ³ *ADONAI* is used in this paper for the tetragrammaton, except in well-known phrases where *LORD* is used.
- ⁴ For a review of the history of research on the Parable of the Vineyard, see (Snodgrass 1998, pp. 187–216; Yarbrow Collins 2007, pp. 541–44).
- ⁵ This article proceeds on the premise that Mark’s Gospel was written around 70 CE to an audience of Jewish and Gentile Yeshua believers in close proximity to the Land of Israel and should be read as a Jewish text (see Oliver 2013, pp. 32–33; Boyarin 2012) or at least within the boundaries of Jewishness (Van Maaren 2019, pp. 228–33). For convenience, I use the word “Mark” for both the author of the Gospel and the actual text of the Gospel. I am neither indicating the author’s name nor the name of the text but using them as widely accepted attributions.
- ⁶ Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom of God is explained more fully in note 32 below.
- ⁷ Not all scholars agree that Mark refers to the establishment of the kingdom of God. Some hold that Mark is a Christian response to the Roman imperial cult (Kim 1998) or Roman propaganda (Winn 2007). For a comprehensive evaluation of Mark’s use of the phrase “kingdom of God” within the boundaries of 2nd Temple Judaism, see (Van Maaren 2019, pp. 269–77).
- ⁸ Though the wording in Mark 1:2 has affinity to both Ex 23:20 (LXX) and Mal 3:1 (LXX), the Exodus passage has greater similarity in the wording and the Malachi passage in context. Thus, both verses are mentioned (Yarbrow Collins 2007, p. 136).
- ⁹ To avoid a possible methodological conflict, I have not included the confrontation over handwashing in 7:1–23 or the events in 11:1–12:12 here, except for the confrontation in 11:27–33, which are addressed below.
- ¹⁰ Ruth and Boaz, in the Book of Ruth, exemplify living the Torah in *hesed* in everyday life. For the most part, the LXX translates *חסד* as *ἔλεος* (mercy or kindness) and *δικαιοσύνην* (righteousness, justice).
- ¹¹ See, for example, (Allison 1994, pp. 270–78; 2005, pp. 153–60; Sanders 1992, pp. 257–60), especially the multiple Jewish sources cited there. Philo mentions the two-fold division of the Decalogue (Ex 20:2–17; Dt 5:7–21)—five commandments on each of the ‘two tablets’ (Ex 34:28; Philo, *Decal.* 50; cf. 106; cf. Ps.-Philo, LAB 12.10; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.101.)—as a summary of the Torah (*Heir* 168; cf. *Spec.* 2.63. Philo writes as though his interpretation of the Decalogue as a summary of the Torah is well-known or at least obvious *Decal.* 19–20; 154; cf. *Spec.* 1:1; cf. Tg. Ps.-J. on Ex 24:12.) On the Decalogue as a summary of the Law and the double love command as its representative, see (Baker 2017, pp. 9–11) and 34, fn. 7 that refers to (Hakala 2014, pp. 45–65) for a survey of Jewish literature on the Decalogue as a summary of the Law.
- ¹² See, for example, Philo, *Decal.* 19–20, 50, 106, 108–110, 121, 154; *Spec.* 2.63; *Abr.* 208; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.101; *Wars.* 2.139; *Jub.* 7:20; 20:2–10; *TIss* 5.2; 7:6; *TDan* 5.3; *Tg. Ps.-J.* Lv 19:18; *Did.* 1.2; *Aris.* 229; *1QH* 7.13–14; *b. Shabb.* 31a; *Cant. Rab.* 5:14; *Pesiq. Rab. Kah.* 21:18.
- ¹³ Though the term leprosy in the Tanakh (צרעת) and New Testament (λέπρα) covers a wide array of skin conditions, leper and leprosy are used to coincide with the NRSV translation.
- ¹⁴ For information on leprosy in the Tanakh and New Testament and various opinions of Jesus’ words and actions in Mark 1:40–44, see (Thiessen 2020, pp. 43–68, esp. pp. 54–64). On the complicated procedure of purification for skin disease, see (Fredricksen 2012, pp. 20–21).
- ¹⁵ Josephus, *Ant.* 13.297 states that the Sadducees did not obey this tradition and that it was not a command in the Torah. Rabbinic literature also states that not all Jews adhered to such handwashing, see *Num Rab* 20.21; *b. Berahot* 52b and *Yoma* 80b.
- ¹⁶ For information on non-priestly purity, see (Regev 2000) and (Poirier 2003). On the widespread use of handwashing before meals, see (Deines 1993, pp. 228–33).
- ¹⁷ The parenthetical statement “all the Jews” is probably Mark’s tendency for generalizing or hyperbole.
- ¹⁸ The Pharisees and their followers are most closely associated with the “tradition of the elders” (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.10.6; 13.16.2; cf. Furstenberg 2008, p. 178; Deines 2019).
- ¹⁹ One difference is that skin disease, bodily discharges and corpse contamination can be removed with time and water (in the case of corpse impurity, the ashes of the red heifer), but impurity of prohibited animals cannot be removed. On ritual and moral impurity in their biblical and 2nd Temple Jewish contexts, see (Klawans 2000, 2006) and in Christianity in light of Greek and Qumranic practices see (Regev 2004).
- ²⁰ The language of permitted and prohibited is taken up in Rabbinic literature.
- ²¹ “The dietary laws (Lev 11) are juxtaposed with the ritual purity laws (Lev 12–15) but their effects are juxtaposed with expulsion from the land (Lev 20:22–26), a characteristic of moral impurity” (Van Maaren 2019, p. 311).
- ²² On the defiling force of sin in the Levitical purity system, see (Van Maaren 2019, pp. 310–16).

- For a more through and in-depth study of the Temple in the Gospel of Mark, see (Regev 2010, 2019, pp. 96–126; cf. Van Maaren 2019, pp. 290–316).
- Much of this section is a broader reworking of my article “The Parable of the Vineyard in Mark 12:1–12 as Contested Authority” (Hillel 2023).
- See, for example, (Hooker 1988, pp. 8–9; Moloney 2002, pp. 235–36; Gray 2010, pp. 75–76, 91). For a survey of historical issues and bibliography, see (Evans 2001, pp. 210–31).
- Gerhardsson prefers the Hebrew term *mashal/meshalim* (משל/משלים) because it is broader than the Greek word *parabole* (παραβολή) and distinguishes between aphoristic *meshalim* and narrative *meshalim*. Hence, Mk 1:1–12 is a narrative *mashal* (1988).
- Levenson (1993, pp. 227–29) explains how Christian readers have tended to understand this parable through a supersessionist lens, concluding that Jesus’ cursing of the fig tree means that the Temple and the sacrificial system are cursed and will be destroyed (cf. Marcus 2009, p. 814).
- Not all scholars concur that Mark presents Jesus as accepting the title of Son of David. For a brief survey of scholarly support for the varying opinions, see (Van Maaren 2019, p. 288, n. 227). Targum Jonathan the Psalms also interprets Psalm 118:22–29 as a reference to King David, apparently reading it against the narrative of 1 Samuel 16:1–13.
- This understanding agrees with the well-attested acceptance of the Davidic descent of the Messiah in the Tanakh, 2nd Temple Tannaitic literature and later Christian literature, thereby showing continuity of tradition. For examples and explanations, see (Marcus 1992, pp. 139–45).
- Catchpole (1984, pp. 319–21) gives examples of victorious leaders ceremoniously welcomed into different cities or military camps. In relation to Jerusalem, he mentions Alexander the Great (Josephus *Ant.* 11:325–39), Appolonius (2 Macc 4:21–22) Marcus Agrippa (Josephus *Ant.* 16:12–15) and Simon Maccabeus (1 Macc 13:43–48). Gombis (2018) compares Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem in Mark 11:1–11 with 1 Macc 12:43–48, concluding that Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem was subversive and not triumphant.
- The view of magic and religion in the Greek and Roman worlds is much blurrier. See (Ogden 1999).
- The use of an indicative perfect verb in the first statement, “the time is fulfilled” *πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς*, indicates that the decisive moment (*καιρὸς*) for the fulfillment of prophetic hope for messianic deliverance is not just imminent, but it is here. The second part of the proclamation *ἡγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ* also uses an indicative perfect verb. However, considering the eschatological context and that *ἡγγίζω* is an action verb contra *πληρόω*, which is stative, the phrase does not necessarily mean that the action is completed. “Has come near” *ἡγγικεν* can mean that the result of its coming near is now near (France 2002, pp. 92–93).
- Robbers (*λῃστής*) is a keyword in Mk 11–15. See (Regev 2019, pp. 107–9) and the sources listed there.
- Criticism of the Temple leadership and Temple was rampant, e.g., Jer 8:8–13, Pss Sol, 1 En. 89–90. See Buth and Kvasnica (2006, p. 65), who among others, have noted that similar criticism of the Temple authorities exists without rejecting the Temple in various Jewish texts from the Tanakh through Rabbinic Literature.
- Mark’s Jesus typically responds to confrontation with parables (e.g., 2:17, 19–22; 3:27; chap. 4; 7:15). These parables evoke earlier stories and whisper to the audience to pay attention to what they hear (Levine 2014, p. 8; Hays 2016, p. 15).
- Mark rarely explains the correspondence between the allusions and echoes to the Tanakh and Jesus. The reader is left to make the connections themselves. See (Hays 2016).
- The vineyard/vine is a standard metaphor for Israel in the Tanakh (Ps 80:7–19 (HB 8–20); Is 5:1–7, 27:2–5; Jer 2:21, 5:10, 6:9, 8:13, 12:10; Hos 10:1; Ez 15:1–8, 17:5–10, 19:10–14) and early Judaism (LAB 12:8–9, 39:2; 4 Ezra 5:23–27; 2 Bar 36:3).
- The language of the Akedah in the LXX, adjective *ἀγαπητός/ον* to describe Abraham’s son, his only one, the one he loved, prefigures its use in Mark. God calls Jesus his *ἀγαπητός* twice in Mark, at his baptism (1:11) and transfiguration (9:7) (Levenson 1993, pp. 30–31, 226–29; cf. pp. 200 & 207). (Yarbro Collins 2007, p. 150) suggests that Isa 42:1 is a more likely explanation for the phrase “beloved one.”
- Traditionally, it is believed that James was the leader of the Jerusalem *ekklesia* until he was martyred in 62 or 69 CE.
- Jesus’ statement, “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations,” supports this interpretation, especially considering that the proclamation was made in the Court of the Gentiles, where the moneychangers and sellers were situated.
- This wordplay is common in the Tanakh and New Testament, see (Snodgrass 2011, pp. 113–18). A similar *jeu de mots* is found in the famous midrash attributed to Rabbi Eleazar (b. Ber. 64a). It cannot be definitively stated that Mark’s immediate audience would have understood this pun.
- The restoration of Israel mentioned in Dt 30 and Is 27:6 are two examples among many in the Tanakh that denote the eternal election of Israel.
- The exact date of the Targum is difficult to discern due to the interpretative layers. Bruce Chilton (1987, pp. xxiv–xxv) explains, “By taking into consideration the interpretative levels (and strata within those levels, . . . it is possible to arrive at a consistent picture of how the Targum took shape. During the Tannaitic and Amoraic periods, it would appear, rabbis developed an interpretative translation of Isaiah. Successive generations took up the work of earlier interpreters until the coherent Targum we can now read emerged.”
- The Qumran text 4Q500 contains seven fragments, six of which are very small (Baumgarten 1989; Brooke 1995, p. 268).

- ⁴⁵ Implicit allusions to the Temple have been found in the correspondence between the tower that the owner built (Mk 12:2) with Targum of Isaiah 5:2, which identifies the tower with the sanctuary (de Moor 1998, pp. 70–71; cf. Evans 2016, pp. 289–302), and the “gate of the holy height” in 4Q500 (Brooke 1995, pp. 270–71), as well as between the fence and wine vat (Mk 12:2) with the removal (destruction) of the sanctuary and the altar in Targum Isaiah 5 (de Moor 1998, pp. 69–70; cf. Evans 2016, pp. 299–302).

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