**Mark’s Inclusion of ‘For All Nations’ in 11:17d and the International Vision of Isaiah**

Mark A. Awabdy and Fredrick J. Long

**Abstract:** Despite recent scholarly recognition of the Isaianic backdrop to Mark’s Gospel, Jesus’ citation of Isa 56:7 and Jer 7:11 in Mark 11:17 has not been sufficiently interpreted; specifically, the phrase “for all nations” (from Isa 56:7) is considered redactional or is simply deemed relatively unimportant. Yet, the authenticity of Jesus’ citation has been recently affirmed. Moreover, 11:17 is structurally focal in a chiastic arrangement within the narrative, with “for all nations” being central. Isaiah 56 was issuing critique of religious leaders for failing to include foreign worshippers. It seems plausible that Jesus as a Jewish teacher understood this and combined Isa 56:7 with Jer 7:11 to speak a prophetic word, even a divine word, that valued foreigners while indicting the religious leaders. This article is a text-based demonstration of the correlation of ISB with Vernon K. Robbins’ socio-rhetorical interpretive heuristic, in order to explore the significance of Jesus’ use of Isa 56:7 and Jer 7:11 in Mark 11:17.

**INTRODUCTION**

There is no paucity of scholarly interest in Mark’s so-called “temple cleansing” episode (11:15-19), framed by the withered fig tree scenes (11:12-14, 19-25). Scholars have offered several interpretations of Mark’s account, which include a “protest against commercial activity, creation of historical or eschatological space for the Gentiles, eschatological purification, [and] revolutionary putsch.” Unclear is whether the account reflects only Markan redaction or contains authentic teaching of Jesus. In either case, interpreters tend to focus upon Jer 7:11 and Jesus’ confrontation of the commercialization of the temple, predicting its doom. Jesus’ use of Isa 56:7, and particularly the phrase “for all nations” (which is omitted in Matthew and Luke) is either considered a Markan redaction or not representative of Jesus’...
primary concern.’ Such conclusions are problematic, because the same interpreters have observed that the phrase “for all nations” is central to Isaiah’s concern, and/or that the combination of Isa 56:7 with Jer 7:11 is central to the Markan account, which is certainly true (see our structural presentation below).

Recently, Steven Moyise and Nicholas Perrin have provided good reasons for the authenticity of Jesus’ use of Isa 56:7 with Jer 7:11.1 Indeed, 5. France concludes, “it would be going too far to suggest that the primary object of Jesus’ protest was the interests of Gentile worshippers as such...” (Gospel of Mark, 445). Wright too quickly moves from Isa 56 and its critique of leadership to Jer 7 and the destruction of the temple (Jesus, 418-22). William R. Telford, The Barren Tree and the Withered Tree (JSNTSS 1; Sheffield: University of Sheffield Press, 1980) makes only two passing references to Isa 56:7 always conjoined with Jer 7:11.

6. France argues, “In Isaiah it is this phrase which is the point of the sentence...Mark’s inclusion of the phrase as part of a quotation defending Jesus’ reform of the use of the Court of the Gentiles is likely to be deliberate....But it does not seem to be here, as in Isaiah, the main point of the quotation” (Gospel of Mark, 445). France is followed by Stein (Mark, 517).

7. Perkins, Mark, 661. Stein observes, “In the Markan context the emphasis of the Isaiah quotation falls upon ‘for all the nations’” but agrees with France “that this may not have been the main emphasis of Jesus in cleansing the temple” (Mark, 517). Puzzling, too, is France’s interpreting the intentions of Jesus’ actions, not in light of Isa 56:7, but Zech 14:21 (“There shall no longer be traders in the house of the Lord”), which is not cited or alluded to in any of the Gospels: “it would not be inappropriate to describe Jesus’ action as deliberately re-enacting Zc. 14:21” (Gospel of Mark, 438).

8. Steve Moyise, “Jesus and Isaiah,” Neot 43 (2009): 249-70; Nicholas Perrin, Jesus the Temple (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 83-113. Perrin has traced a reasonable historical context within which to understand Jesus’ thought and action at the temple, but fails to take seriously the Isaian vision as expected by Jesus to have been enacted already, just as Isaiah had expected it to have been; both Isaiah and Jesus were indicting the religious leaders for failing to include all the nations in their worship of Yahweh. Instead, for Perrin, Isaiah’s is an eschatological vision that Jesus is inaugurating: “As Jesus understood perfectly well, Isaiah’s text pointed to a future, glorious reality, and in quoting the text he is intimating that the future is now present: the promised pilgrimage of the Gentiles and the eschatological re-gathering of exiled Israel had begun” (85; cf. 99, 109, 111, 176 n.65). So, for Perrin, Jesus’ critique of the temple establishment was simply “the ineradicable greed of Israel’s religious leaders” and concomitant abuse of the poor (110). However, Jesus’ pairing of Isa 56:7 and Jer 7:11 in Mark 11:17 condemns the temple establishment for the failure to include all nations as a Jewish teacher one would expect Jesus to provide some rationale for his symbolic temple actions.2 Joel Marcus is right to observe the possible exegetical technique of qīzērā šāwā on the basis of the common words “called” and “house.”3 But what clues might Jesus’ use of Isa 56:7 combined with Jer 7:11 provide for recovering his intentions as presented in Mark’s narrative?

Important evidence is found in Mark’s retention of the dative modifying phrase in the Isaiah quotation at 11:17d: “My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations” (NT and LXX: πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν; MT: לְכָל אֵדֶם). This phrase Matthew and Luke curiously omit (Matt 21:13//Luke 19:46). An investigation of the Third Isaian context, as will be further enumerated below, uncovers the intent of 56:7, namely, that covenant-keeping foreigners, have under-represented the Third Isaian context, whereas the Markan Jesus, conversely, has preserved that prophetic, confrontative context.

Assuming Markan priority, one wonders why Matthew and Luke within the worship of Yahweh. The reason is not “either/or” but “both/and”;

as both greed with abuse of the poor and failure to welcome all nations are points of Jesus’ prophetic critique. Indeed, Perrin (86) provides evidence from 1 Macc 7:34-38 that shows how Isa 56:7 had been cited (nearly quoted) in reference to Maccabean temple practices. Instructive is how this citation replaces the phrase “for all nations” with another: when weeping about Nicanor’s threat to burn down the temple, the high priests pray at the altar: “You chose this house to be called by your name, and to be for your people a house of prayer and supplication” (1 Macc 7:34, NRSV, underlining ours).


10. Marcus, Mark 8-16, 784. For Marcus, however, this exegetical technique is a result of Markan redaction (see note 4 above). For a description of midrashic principles, see Craig Evans, “Midrash” DJG, 544-47.

omit this phrase against Mark;¹² this is especially so, since Matthew and Luke are concerned with the global scope of the Gospel. Did the oral tradition of the first century Roman church influence Mark’s preservation of modifying phrase “for all nations” since the phrase captured Jesus’ vision for Gentiles to be incorporated into God’s saving purposes? This is possible, though unverifiable, and yet does not explain why the oral tradition underlying Matthew’s and Luke’s accounts would have omitted this phrase. Assuming Markan priority and Matthew’s and Luke’s use of the Q materials, have Matthew and Luke, against Mark, preferred the Q materials which omitted the phrase? Such a theory is difficult to maintain as Matthew and Luke, even more expressly than Mark, emphasize the international scope of the gospel and Christianity. Could Matthew and Luke’s omission be explained as a Markan gloss, that is, a later scribal addition to Mark’s account?¹³ There is no manuscript support for such a conjecture. Hans Deiter Betz argues instead that Matthew excludes the phrase because it “does not fit into his scheme of development, according to which Jesus turns to the Gentiles only in Matt 21:43.”¹⁴ If correct, the same rationale would not explain Luke’s omission. Might Matthew and Luke be abridging Mark’s more detailed account (a common redactional pattern)? If Luke has deliberately abridged Mark here, the same cannot be said of Matthew since he follows Mark’s longer edition in the first verse (Mark 11:19) and seems to have inserted into this pericope his own content (Matt 21:15-16). Are Matthew and Luke attempting to eliminate Markan redundancy or improve Markan grammar, as they do elsewhere?¹⁵ There is no obvious redundancy here, and although Mark’s syntax and word order replicates the Septuagint (which has translated πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν “for all nations” in 11:17 in context has not been sufficiently addressed by these interpreters.¹⁶ Moreover, commentators

appear, then, that Mark retains the phrase intentionally to contribute to an Isaianic theme in his Gospel.

Joel Marcus and Rikki Watts have sufficiently identified Isaiah as contributing substantially to Mark’s portrayal of Jesus’ ministry.¹⁷ Thorsten Moritz describes Isaian themes that include Jesus’ prophetic confrontation and critique of Israel’s leadership, his divine visitation to and judgment of the Jerusalem temple, and the favorable implications of both for the nations.¹⁸ However, oddly the contribution of the phrase πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν “for all nations” in 11:17 in context has not been sufficiently addressed by these interpreters.¹⁹ Moreover, commentators

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¹⁻¹⁶ Joel Marcus, Way of the Lord; Rikki E. Watts, Isaiah’s New Exodus and Mark (WUNT 88; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1997).


¹⁻¹⁸ For instance, Marcus offers extensive comments on Mark 11:15-19, but provides only one parenthetical reference to Isa 56:7, despite otherwise excellent research citing extra-biblical sources. This is likely due to his understanding that Isa 56:7 represents Markan redaction (Mark 8-16, 790-93). Watts concludes that “for all the nations” in 11:17 indicated that the temple space for the Gentiles was to be considered “an equally sacred space” (Isaiah’s New Exodus, 324). Otherwise, Watts argues, “there is no further comment in the larger context about Gentiles per se. Thus, although the statement is certainly consonant with an INE [Isaian New Exodus] perspective on the nations, consistent with the Markan Jesus’ hesitancy to actually inaugurate a ‘mission to the Gentiles’ (Mk 7:27), nothing more is done to elucidate this brief but pregnant declaration.” Yet, Watts remains only tentative on the importance of 11:17 saying that “Israel’s NE [new Exodus] and the nations’ salvation (cf. Isa 56:7 in Mk 11:17) is predicated on the scandal of Χριστὸς ἐσταυρωμένος (1 Cor 1:23)…” (238) and that the ambiguous “many” of 10:45, includes the nations “not only given the immediate context in which the rulers of these nations are being discussed (Mark 10:42f) but also perhaps in light of Isaiah 56:7 in Mark 11:17” (282, underlining ours). Moritz (“Mark” 46) understandably (due to space constraints) does not comment specifically on 11:15-19. However, correctly he understands the broader meaning of Jesus’ triumphal entry (Mark 11:1-19) as Isaianic and “nothing less than God’s return to his people to sacrificially complete Israel’s failed mission on her behalf (10:45)” (“Mark,” 45) and then discusses Jesus’ judgment of the temple in 11:12-26 as will be enacted by him as the Son of Man (cf. Mark 13).
fail to consider the significance of Mark’s retention of this phrase. Specifically, we will argue that Mark’s Gospel affirms Jesus as one who seeks fulfillment of Yahweh’s international mission for the nations as presented in Isaiah, but who simultaneously must prophetically enact the impending judgment upon the corrupted temple (Jer 7:11) because of the failure to realize the temple’s function as “a house of prayer for all nations” (Isa 56:7) in continuity with Isaiah’s initial prophetic critique.

Supporting evidence for our claim will be supplied through using an evidential approach informed by IBS and the multifaceted socio-rhetorical interpretive heuristic as described by Vernon K. Robbins.20 Norman Perrin and later Stephen H. Smith, who commented particularly on the structure and theology of Mark 11-12, called for “synthesizing the methodologies” in order to discover Mark’s theology.21 Robbins has envisioned interpreting a pericope by analysis of its inner texture, intertexture,22 social-cultural texture,23 ideological texture,24 and sacred texture.25 In actual occurrence, these textural dimensions co-exist simultaneously in a pericope informing one another, but there is benefit to investigate them distinctly.

This paper will, first, summarize how Mark intertextually portrays Jesus as agent of Yahweh’s international mission in Isaiah; second, investigate the inner textural dimensions of 11:15-19 that orient

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19. One notable exception is James R. Edwards, The Gospel According to Mark (Pillar NT Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 202), 343-45, quoted at 343: “The temple is not the sole property of Israel but a witness to the nations, the place where anyone who ‘loves the name of the Lord [may] worship him’ (Isa 56:6), a place where God ‘will gather still others’ (Isa 56:8). That, at least, was the purpose of the temple, had it not been perverted into ‘a den of robbers.’” We would agree, but would add importantly that the Isaian context of 56:7 was one of prophetic critique, and Jesus’ teaching and actions suggest he understood that Isaian meaning.


21. N. Perrin, “The Evangelist as Author: Reflections on method in the Study and Interpretation of the Synoptic Gospels and Acts,” BR 17 (1972): 5-18. Perrin is cited by Stephen H. Smith, “The Literary Structure of Mark 11:1—12:40,” Novt 31 (1989): 104-24. Smith argues, “Too often scholars have drawn conclusions about Gospel theology from a purely redactional or linguistic analysis, or even by adopting a blanket approach in which the gospel is understood from a literary-critical perspective, regardless of other methodologies. Surely it is time to take stock of current critical scholarship on Mark, and to heed the advice issued some 16 years ago by the late Norman Perrin that our understanding of Mark’s theology—or that of the other synoptists, for that matter—can be enhanced only by synthesizing the methodologies at our disposal” (104). Cf. Robbins, Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), xiii-xiv.
readers toward the centrality of Jesus’ teaching and the phrase πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν “for all nations” (11:17d); third, probe the ideological texture of Isaiah 56 as the plausible foundation for Jesus’ temple teaching; fourth, consider the social-cultural texture of honor-shame dynamics in Jesus’ temple teaching; and, finally, conclude by considering the implications of textural interpretation for understanding the sacred textural dimensions of 11:15–19.

1. INTERTEXTURE: JESUS AS AGENT OF ISAIAH INTERNATIONAL MISSION IN MARK

Oral-scribal intertexture involving recitation, recontextualization, and reconfiguration of Isaiah is found throughout Mark’s Gospel. Instances of recitation (direct quotation of an authoritative source, often by name) include Mark 1:3 (Isa 40:3), probably Mark 4:12 (Isa 6:9–10), Mark 7:6–7 (Isa 29:13), and our passage in Mark 11:17 (Isa 66:24). This suggests that Malachi’s prophecy was a restatement and elaboration of Isaiah’s in light of Exod 23:20, such that it is “understood within an Isaianic framework.” This suggests that Malachi’s prophecy was a restatement and elaboration of Isaiah’s in light of Exod 23:20, such that it is “understood within an Isaianic framework.” This likely explains why Mark quotes first Mal 3:1a followed by Isa 40:3 under the rubric of “Isaiah’s speech.”

Unquoted in Mark’s Gospel, however, is Mal 3:1b which continues the thought: “and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts” (RSV). According to Malachi, there will follow a sudden appearance of the Lord to his temple bringing a covenant in order to fulfill Isaiah’s vision. Why is this portion not provided? Might Mal 3:1b be understood as fulfilled by the Markan Jesus? Importantly, the Synoptic Gospels present Jesus as only visiting Jerusalem one time; the start of this momentous journey is starkly demarcated in Matt 16:21 and Luke 9:51, but not in Mark (cf. 10:32–33). In contrast, scholars acknowledge that John’s Gospel account is more complete with Jesus going to Jerusalem three or four times. So, why did Mark (presumably followed by Matthew and Luke) present only one momentous journey of Jesus to Jerusalem? It is possible that Mark did so, in order to show how that final journey of Jesus to the temple is a fulfillment of Mal 3:1, which restates part of Isaiah’s vision in Isa 40:3. Such a view is supported by the structural priority and Isaian intertexture of Mark 11:17.

Most interpreters argue that Mark redacts the Isaian context.
at the temple—cleansing episode (Isa 56:7 at Mark 11:17) to advance a pro-Gentile theme: Jesus is portrayed as intending to create space for the Gentiles historically, eschatologically, or covenantally. According to the most popular view, Jesus cleared out the congestion in the temple expressly to (re)establish a locale for Gentiles historically to pray undisrupted in the temple’s outer courtyard. J. Bradley Chance has observed that Isa 56 calls for more than foreigners praying in the “outer precincts” of the temple since in 56:7, “Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be acceptable on my altar….” Therefore “The temple, God’s house, was to be a place of prayer and sacrificial worship for all nations. Full inclusion is the vision of Isaiah.” Such is consonant with the Markan Jesus who extends the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom to the nations (4:30-32; 13:9), as exemplified even in Jesus’ own ministry which reaches to the “Gentile” Syro-Phoenician woman (7:25-30), the Gerasenes Demoniac (5:1-20), and the Roman Centurion who is the first human to recognize Jesus as “son of God” (15:39).

Other interpreters believe creating eschatological space is Jesus’ optimal concern in Mark’s account. Endorsing this view, Richard Hays points explicitly toward the Third Isaian eschatological vision of the redemption of Jerusalem which provides a context for the gentiles to “come to Mount Zion worship alongside God’s people” at the Jerusalem temple. After Hays enumerates Isa 56:7-8, he elucidates his claim:

By citing this passage, Mark portrays Jesus’ protest action as an indictment of the Temple authorities for

30. However, Casey contends that πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν in Mark’s gospel is optimally concerned only about Jewish people, and not an international mission (“Culture and Historicity,” 312). During Passover the Jews were not a minority of the nations present in the temple, but the vast majority. Thus, cleansing the temple of the buyers and sellers “would be to permit the throngs of Jewish people present for Passover to pray anywhere in the temple area. There was not room for all of them in the inner courts.” Yet this suggestion is, for Mark’s gospel, counterintuitive to πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, especially when read in its Third Isaian setting, which points expressly beyond Jewish people to international mission.

31. Incigneri, Gospel to the Romans, 141.
32. “Cursing of the Temple,” 274.
33. Although for evidence that the Gerasenes demoniac was Jewish, see Watts, Isaiah’s New Exodus, 164-66.

turning the Temple into a bazaar, cluttering the outer “court of the Gentiles” and making it unsuitable as a place of worship for the Gentile “others” who might want to gather there to pray. By driving out the merchants, Mark’s Jesus clears the way, figuratively, for the restored worship of the kingdom of God, in which all nations will participate along with the returning exiles of Israel. Thus, Jesus’ action looks forward to the eschatological redemption of Jerusalem.

Closely related to this view is that Mark’s Jesus intended to create covenantal space for the Gentiles, that is, “to adumbrate the entry of Gentiles into the new covenant.” David Seeley roots this understanding squarely in Jesus’ mission to the gentiles in Mark’s gospel:

In Mark 13:10, Jesus says that the gospel must be preached to all nations. In Mark 15:39, the Gentile centurion becomes the first person after Jesus’ death to confess him as the Son of God. These passages suggest that Mark was looking toward Gentiles as fertile ground for Christian preaching. The notion that Jesus attacked the temple because it was somehow taking insufficient account of Gentiles would have fit very well into this schema.

Similarly, Paula Fontana Qualls sees covenant as central to the Isaian and Jeremian quotations which Mark employs strategically. She notes that the beginning of Isaiah 56 is a summons to justice (56:1-2) and covenant fidelity (56:3-8), then an indictment against wicked rulers (56:9-12). Therefore, she asserts: “The purpose of the temple is here defined; it is for covenant relationship…. The heart of worship and faithfulness to Yahweh is covenant. And this is a covenant that is ‘for all peoples.’ This

is why Yahweh says that he is not limited to the temple (Is. 66:1-2), but resides with the humble and contrite in spirit. True and empty worship are being contrasted.” So Jesus in Mark’s account is centrally concerned with removing impediments so that covenantally faithful Gentiles— or as Scott Brown identifies them, “Gentile God-fearers and proselytes”38—can worship Yahweh as Isaiah envisions.

It is very likely that Mark’s Jesus in 11:15-19 intended to create space for Gentiles historically, eschatologically, or covenantally, if not all three, implementing the intent of Isaiah’s grand, pan-ethnic vision. Does this reading, however, place too much weight on Mark’s retaining of the phrase πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν “for all nations” in 11:17d? We don’t think so. Arguably, Mark not only deliberately retained the original phrase in Jesus’ teaching, but through chiastic arrangement centralized the phrase in the account, depicting Jesus as one who perceived and enacted Isaiah’s international mission within the setting of the Jerusalem temple.

2. INNER TEXTURE: MARK 11:15-19 AND THE CENTRALITY OF ΠΑΣΙΝ ΤΟΙΣ ἘΘΝΕΣΙΝ (11:17D)

There are several contextually limiting factors, particularly structural and syntactical, that centralize the phrase πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν “for all nations” (11:17d) in Mark’s temple cleansing episode (11:15-19) within the cursing of the fig tree scene (11:12-14, 20-25).39 The colons of Mark’s temple cleansing paragraph reflect a progressive and repetitive structure that supports a chiastic presentation (ABC-D-CBA) centering on Jesus’ teaching in 11:17 (itself presented chiastically—see further below):40

The entire scene is framed by the cursing of the fig tree (A and A’). Next, Jesus and his disciples entering (11:15) and exiting (11:19) the city of Jerusalem (B and B’).41 The exit of Jesus and his disciples out of the city

40. This chiastic arrangement is essentially affirmed by Watts, Isaiah’s New Exodus, 304. His presentation extends it into 11:1-11 and 11:26-12:12, affirming 11:15-19 as central.

41. There is a textual variant in 11:19 that leaves open the possibility that Jesus left the city (ἐξεπορεύετο) without his disciples. The external evidence for the 3rd singular reading ἐξεπορεύετο “he went out” (X C [D ἔκ τῆς] Θ f3 33 157 180 579 892 1006 1241 1243 1292 1505 Byz [E G H N Σ] Lect: i ע b, f, f₂, i, k, l, 14 vg syr h, syb 3 cop, b, e eth geo slav) is slightly superior to the 3rd plural reading ἐξεπορεύοντο “they went out” (A B Δ Ψ 2033 565 700 1071 2427 itaur, c, d, r1 syr P, h mg [arm] geo), but both readings have manuscript support that trumps the minor readings. Both readings are geographically widely distributed.
in 11:19 functions furthermore in conjunction with the surrounding withered fig tree episodes (11:12-14, 20-25). Together Jesus’ cursing of the fig tree and his entering and exiting the temple serve as Jesus’ symbolic indictment of the corrupt Jerusalem temple, not unlike when Yahweh’s presence left the Solomonic temple in Ezek 10:18-19. This will point will be discussed below.

The 11:15-19 episode, moreover, moves rapidly due to Mark’s repetitive use of καί, many active verbs, and Mark’s apparent précis of Jesus’ scriptural teaching, which is the grounds for his action (11:17). In 11:15b-16 Jesus is the sole agent of the active main verbs. The spotlight is on him as actor (11:15b-16) and teacher (11:17), but his teaching is the crux of the episode. Jesus is depicted as engaged in “purposeful action.” Contra to Matt 21:13 and Luke 19:46, Mark retains the imperfect verb ἐδίδασκεν, likely ingressive (“he began to teach”), in conjunction with the imperfect retained in indirect discourse, ἔλεγεν (“and he was saying”). Ostensibly, the buyer-sellers (11:15-16) are the object of Jesus’ teaching, since there is a double reference to them in 11:17 (αὐτοῖς by the narrator; ὑμεῖς by Jesus). However, when the chief priests and the scribes “heard” (ἠκούσαν) Jesus’ teaching, they “began seeking” (ἐζήτουν; imperfect tense) how to destroy him (11:18). The social-cultural texture of honor and shame associated with this confrontation will be explored further below.

The inner textural importance of the phrase πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, moreover, is seen since it is chiastically central to Jesus’ teaching in 11:17, and share a relatively equal amount of Alexandrian text type support, but ἐξεπορεύετο has broader text type distribution (Alexandrian, Alexandrian with Byzantine influence, Byzantine, Independent witnesses, other witnesses) than the ἐξεπορεύοντο reading (primarily Alexandrian and Independent text types).

With regard to the internal evidence, within the Markan context ἐξεπορεύετο is the lectio difficilior since it is narratively disjunctive for Jesus and his disciples to enter Jerusalem (11:15), but Jesus alone to leave the city (11:19), and then in the next verse Jesus and his disciples are the agents of the plural verbs (11:20). On the other hand, one may say the 3mp ἐξεπορεύοντο is the lectio difficilior since Mark uses the singular form of the verb or participle 7 times (1:5; 7:19; 7:20; 7:23; 10:17; 10:46; 13:1), but the plural form only thrice (6:11; 7:15; 7:21). There is the possibility that the 3ms ἐξεπορεύετο reading was a harmonization with the number of Matthew’s singular verb “he went out of the city” (ἐξῆλθεν ἔξω τῆς πόλεως) in Mt 21:17. Although the external evidence slightly favors ἐξεπορεύετο, this reading is perhaps too disjunctive and may be explained as a harmonization in number with Matthew. Most likely, then, the inclusio of Mark’s Temple cleansing saga is enforced by Jesus and his disciples entering (11:15) and leaving (ἐξεπορεύοντο) the city.

which itself is central to the chiasm of 11:12-30.

That Mark has shaped 11:17 by chiasmus is corroborated by Mark’s word order against Matthew and Luke. Mark follows the LXX, MT, or plausibly Aramaic, but notably differs in his placement of the added pronoun αὐτόν from Matthew and Luke to support the chiasm:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LXX (Isa 56:7d)</th>
<th>MT</th>
<th>Aramaic (Targums)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>ὁ γάρ οἶκός μου οἶκος προσευχῆς κληθήσεται πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν</td>
<td>כִּי בִיתִי בִּית תְפָלָה יִקְרָא לְכָל הַעַמִּים</td>
<td>בִּית מַדְרֵשׁ בַּיָּתִיל תְפָלָה לְכָל עָמָמִים</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>ὑμεῖς δὲ πεποιήκατε αὐτόν</td>
<td>כִּי אָבְדָם בֵּית צִלוּשׁ יִתְכַּרֶּה לְעָמִים</td>
<td>הָבִית־מַכְנִישָׁת רַשִּׁיעִי</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>κληθήσεται</td>
<td>מִשְׁכָּרוֹת מְרֵצִים</td>
<td>עֲבָדִים עַל עַמִּים</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν</td>
<td>לְכָל הַעַמִּים</td>
<td>לְכָל עָמִים</td>
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<tr>
<td>D'</td>
<td>ύμεῖς δὲ</td>
<td>כִּי אָבְדָם בֵּית צִלוּשׁ יִתְכַּרֶּה לְעָמִים</td>
<td>הָבִית־מַכְנִישָׁת רַשִּׁיעִי</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C'</td>
<td>πεποιήκατε</td>
<td>מִשְׁכָּרוֹת מְרֵצִים</td>
<td>עֲבָדִים עַל עַמִּים</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B'</td>
<td>αὐτόν</td>
<td>מִשְׁכָּרוֹת מְרֵצִים</td>
<td>עֲבָדִים עַל עַמִּים</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A'</td>
<td>σπήλαιον λῃστῶν</td>
<td>מַרְאֵי קֶשֶׁר לְכָל עָמִים</td>
<td>מַרְאֵי קֶשֶׁר לְכָל עָמִים</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

42. P. M. Casey notes the possibility that Mark’s source could have had an Aramaic version, in which case the translation would still be very similar to the LXX and MT (“Culture and Historicity: The Cleansing of the Temple,” CBQ 59 [1997]: 318).

43. John’s account in 2:16 can hardly be called parallel, and thus is not compared here with the triple tradition.
Mark 11:17 ὁ οἶκός μου οἶκος προσευχῆς κληθήσεται πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐθνεσιν; ὑμεῖς δὲ πεποίηκατε αὐτὸν σπήλαιον λῃστῶν.

Matt 21:13 ὁ οἶκός μου οἶκος προσευχῆς κληθήσεται, ὑμεῖς δὲ αὐτὸν ποιεῖτε σπήλαιον λῃστῶν.


Assuming Markan priority, Matthew follows Mark generally, but places αὐτὸν before the verb in the second colon, omits πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, and replaces Mark’s perfect tense verb πεποίηκατε (possibly corresponding to a circa AD 70 date) with the present form ποιεῖτε (possibly corresponding to a pre-AD 70 date). “Luke diverges from Mark by replacing the future passive κληθήσεται with the future ἔσται (from εἶμι) in the first colon, omitting πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, and replacing πεποίηκατε with the aorist form ἐποιήσατε (possibly corresponding to a post-AD 70 date).”

The significance for this paper is that Mark located αὐτὸν before the second colon’s verb in order to shape his chiasmus. Finally, it should be said that the chiastic arrangement parallels the D-D’ elements with genitive modifiers, “house of mine” (ὁ οἶκός μου) with “den of robbers” (σπήλαιον λῃστῶν). If Jesus speaks as first person (possibly corresponding to a pre-AD 70 date) with the present form ποιεῖτε (possibly corresponding to a post-AD 70 date), and replaces Mark’s aorist into a historical present. Likewise, one may note that the nations” designates by “… (“you”). Within a contrastive context as exists here, the conjunction δέ brings distinctive focus to what follows (“but you”). The δέ introduces a statement that denounces the agents for having made (note the perfect tense verb form) the temple (αὐτὸν “it” as double accusative internal object) into a den (σπήλαιον as double accusative external complement) full of robbers (genitive of content), which by implication, disadvantaged “all nations.” The temple should have been a place conducive “for all nations” to pray and receive God’s blessing, and ideally a place for Jews to pray for the benefit of all nations, a la, Gen 12:1-3; but as Jesus found it in Mark 11, the temple was not this kind of a place. So, prophetically and didactically Jesus confronted the temple establishment’s failure on the basis of Isaiah’s vision “for all nations.”

3. IDEOLOGICAL TEXTURE: TORAH PREROGATIVES AND REBUKE IN ISAIAH 56

If one affirms that Mark’s Gospel portrays Jesus as agent of Isaiah’s international mission (via intertexture) and that 11:15-19 orients readers toward the centrality of Jesus’ teaching from Isa 56:7 and particularly πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν “for all nations” (via inner texture), then there remains to consider whether Jesus’ actions and teaching on Isa 56:7 in Mark 11:15-19 reflect the ideological impulse of Isa 56:7 in its with inclusive scope (“ALL nations”), but on the other hand, the human agency that has undermined this potential: “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations [πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, but you (ὑμεῖς δέ) have made it a den of robbers.” The dative of advantage “for all nations” (πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν) expresses the temple’s intended reputation (κληθήσεται as predictive future, “will be called/known as”) as a place full of, or characterized by, prayer for the benefit of all nations. Antithetically paired with πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν as the potential beneficiaries is the emphatic personal pronoun subject ὑμεῖς (“you”). Within a contrastive context as exists here, the conjunction δέ brings distinctive focus to what follows (“but you”). The δέ introduces a statement that denounces the agents for having made (note the perfect tense verb form) the temple (αὐτὸν “it” as double accusative internal object) into a den (σπήλαιον as double accusative external complement) full of robbers (genitive of content), which by implication, disadvantaged “all nations.” The temple should have been a place conducive “for all nations” to pray and receive God’s blessing, and ideally a place for Jews to pray for the benefit of all nations, a la, Gen 12:1-3; but as Jesus found it in Mark 11, the temple was not this kind of a place. So, prophetically and didactically Jesus confronted the temple establishment’s failure on the basis of Isaiah’s vision “for all nations.”

44. If one assumes Markan priority and Matthew’s and Luke’s use of Q materials, the popular theory that Matthew and Luke replace Mark’s historical presents with superior verbal forms (i.e., aorists) breaks down here as Matthew converts Mark’s aorist into a historical present. Likewise, one may note that Matthew and Luke remove the recitative ὅτι “that” (untranslated). None of the Evangelists include the explanatory “for” (LXX: γάρ; MT:): There are other differences, but space considerations do not allow us to detail these here.

45. Contra Gundry, Mark, 639, who does not adequately treat “for the nations.” His chiasm is stated as “My house [a] a house of prayer [b] will be called,… but you [b’] have made it [a’] a den of bandits.” Oddly omitted is “for all the nations” (designated by “…”).

46. Most essentially δέ marks new development within narrative, but in a contrastive context δέ marks distinctive focus (Stephen H. Levinsohn, Discourse Features of New Testament Greek: A Coursebook on the Information Structure of New Testament Greek [2nd ed.; Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 2000], 113-18). Levinsohn helpfully explains the significance of δέ in these contrastive contexts: “the characteristic or proposition associated with δέ is more in focus: the negative proposition is usually discarded or replaced by the positive one” (114). However, in Mark 11:17 the positive vision is replaced by the negative outcome of what the temple has become.
A number of scholars have demonstrated the linguistic interconnection between Second Isaiah (chs. 40-55) and Third Isaiah (chs. 56-66), and their findings are beneficial regardless of one’s stance on Isaiah authorship.

3 Let not the foreigner say, Who has attached himself to the LORD, “The LORD will keep me apart from His people”; And let not the eunuch say, “I am a withered tree.” 4 For thus said the LORD: “As for the eunuchs who keep My sabbaths, Who have chosen what I desire And hold fast to My covenant — 5 I will give them, in My House And within My walls, A monument and a name Better than sons or daughters. I will give them an everlasting name Which shall not perish. 6 As for the foreigners Who attach themselves to the LORD, To minister to Him, And to love the name of the LORD, To be His servants — All who keep the sabbath and do not profane it, And who hold fast to My covenant — 7 I will bring them to My sacred mount And let them rejoice in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices Shall be welcome on My altar; For My House shall be called A house of prayer for all peoples (Isa 56:3-7 JPS Tanak).

An intertextual relationship exists between Isa 56:1-8 and Isa 2:2-4 (cf. Mic 4:1-5) which affirms (2:3): “And many peoples will go and say: ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may instruct us in his ways, and that we may walk in his paths.’ For instruction will go out from Zion, the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem” (translation ours). Brevard Childs suggests “The promise of universal acceptance into the worshipping community is set by God’s bringing them to his ‘holy mountain’ (v.7), which is an intertextual play on the promise of the assembly of the nations in Isa. 2:1ff.” Claus Westermann further connects the “foreigners,” or “aliens,” of 56:3-7 with those in 14:1: “aliens will join to them’, a verse which may have roughly the same date as Trito-Isaiah.”

Isaiah 56:1-8 should also be read in relation to Isaiah 40-55. A number of scholars have demonstrated the linguistic interconnection between Second Isaiah (chs. 40-55) and Third Isaiah (chs. 56-66), and their findings are beneficial regardless of one’s stance on Isaiah authorship.


51. Claus Westermann, Isaiah 40-66 (OTL; Trans. by David M. G. Stalker; Great Britain: SCM, 1969), 312. However, against Westermann’s view, Isa 14:1 uses the term נָכָר “immigrant,” whereas Isa 56:3-7 uses the term נָכָר “foreigner.”
These international beneficiaries, these expectant ones, according to a synchronic reading of Isa 56:1-8 (especially v.6), are the new servants of Yahweh, related to, or engendered by, Yahweh’s servant in chs. 40-55. “The ‘servants’ can include foreigners and outcasts who line themselves with the law of God over against the rebels and sinners within and without Israel who continue to resist his will” (italics ours). It should be mentioned that the nations, including the “foreigner” (בָּרוּץ) and “eunuchs” (סְרְסָס) class, in the book of Isaiah are portrayed as co-worshippers of Yahweh with Israel, but also as Israel’s enemies, Yahweh’s servants (e.g., Cyrus), and Israel’s servants. John Oswalt has argued that the framing of Isaiah 56-66 with 56:1-7 and 66:18-24 orients readers to view “the statements about submission of the nations to Zion (not only in chs. 60-62 but also in 45:14-17 and 49:22-26) as partial and not final. God wants the nations to come into his house (56:7) to worship him (66:23)…” We conclude that the red thread that runs through Isa 2:2-4, 14:1-2, chs. 40-55, 56:1-8, and ch. 66, among other passages, is the conceptualization of the instruction and blessings of Torah, and its associated covenantal relationship between Yahweh and his people, a relationship now expressly extended to non-Israelites who keep Yahweh’s covenant.


59. It is debatable whether the inclusion of covenant-keeping “foreigners” (בָּרוּץ) and “eunuchs” (סְרְסָס) in Isa 56:1-8 supplants Deut 23:2-9’s prohibition of three classes of individuals from entering “the assembly of Yahweh” (קְהֵל יְהוָה): one with crushed or severed genitals (סְרְסָס) in Deut 23:2, illegitimately born (בָּרוּץ) in Deut 23:3, and first through tenth generation Ammonites and Moabites (נָמוֹבִּים) in 23:4-7. Third generation Edomites (אדמוֹת) and Egyptians (אֲנָמיִים) are curiously permitted to enter (23:8-9). Herbert Donner argues that Isa 56:1-7 intra-canonically abrogates Deut 23:2-9, and he suggests theological implications and post-exilic consequences (“Jesaja LVI 1-7: Ein Abrogationsfall Innerhalb Des Kanons – Implikationen und Konsequenzen,” Congress Volume: Salamanca [ed. J. Emerton; VTSup 36; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985], 81-95).
Yahweh’s Torah Prescribes Cultic Prerogatives

Yahweh’s Torah in Isa 56, however, is not merely to be understood abstractly as a gift to the nations, but in relation to particular cultic and ethical prerogatives granted to Israelites and non-Israelites together.61 These prerogatives were received or performed in the temple (vv.5-7), were to promote Torah ethics, doing “justice” (משפט) and “righteousness” (צדק) (v.1), and were to be motivated by Yahweh’s imminent salvation and revealed righteousness (תורה תThanOrEqualToíc את היד של התרחוב התמורה). The term “Torah” (תורה) is absent from 56:1-12, but its lucidly alluded to in 56:2, “Happy is the one who does this, the one who holds fast to it: who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil” (translation ours). Particularly, the two halves of the Decalogue appear to be in view: “keeps Sabbath and does not profane it,” and “keeps his hand from doing any evil.” (משמר ידו מעשׂות כל־רע) is shorthand for words (commandments) one through four, relating to the divine-human relationship, and “keeps his hand from doing any evil” (משמר ידו מעשׂות כל־רע) is shorthand for words five through ten, relating to human-human relationships.

Additionally, Isa 56:2-7 reflects the influence of available and abiding Torah traditions that included non-Israelite in worship privileges.62 For instance, “joining” oneself to Yahweh as the foreigner may do (Isa 56:3), with its “separating” counterpart terminology, is not innovative language, but is rooted in “separation/distinction between clean and unclean” in Lev 20:22-26.63 In one sense, then, the formerly unclean foreigners have been transfigured into “the clean” if they “join themselves to Yahweh” (cf. unclean foreigners in Deut 14:21). Language of rejoicing while sacrificing (Isa 56:7) is likely rooted in Israelite cultic gatherings, as for example in Deut 12:5-7. The repetition of Sabbath observance in Isa 56:2, 4, 6 is the strongest link to enduring Torah traditions, reiterating the command to “keep Sabbath” (e.g., Exod 31:12-17; Lev 26:34-35, 42-46). If keeping Sabbath is the optimal concern of

61. Roy D. Wells, Jr., “Isaiah as an Exponent of Torah: Isaiah 56.1-8” in *New Visions of Isaiah* (SOTsup 214; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic), 140-55. Westermann believes Isa 56 and Second Isaiah are rooted in the prophetic tradition, not the exclusivist Priestly and legal tradition (*Isaiah 40-66*, 316). Wells, by showing Isaiah 56’s dependence upon Israelite legal traditions, has, in our view, discredited Westermann’s position.


63. De Hoop, “Comfort or Criticism,” 672.

64. Wells, Jr., “Exponent of Torah,” 152.


isa 56:1-8, then plausibly “The hallowing power of Sabbath observance breaks down proposed limitations of the worshipping community on mount Zion.”63

That Isa 56 granted non-Israelites cultic prerogatives in the Jerusalem temple, substantiated by these abiding Torah traditions, was unique among the post-exilic canonical literature.64 Jeremiah and Ezekiel portray the foreigner as the one who defiles the Jerusalem temple with cultic distortions and syncretistic activities (cf. Jer 57:5-8; Ezek 44:7-9). Ezra and Nehemiah, moreover, are afraid “that the foreigner’s presence in the community will lead to a dissolution of the community’s heritage.”65 In contrast, the unique ideology of Isa 56:1-8 both reinforced the most important Torah traditions – which enforced just and right living and integrated non-Israelites and eunuchs in temple worship – and, as we contend in the next section, criticized Jewish leaders who neglected these Torah traditions in favor of other traditions that justified their preclusion and subjugation of the disadvantaged.

Distorted Use of Yahweh’s Torah Necessitates Rebuke

Yahweh’s Torah, now extended to non-Israelites to carry out its abiding ethical and cultic traditions, must be appropriated by members in the community without adulteration. Here we are indebted to Raymond De Hoop’s persuasive argumentation that Isa 56:1-9 functions not merely as a comfort to ostracized members in the postexilic worshipping community, such as foreigners and eunuchs, but as a criticism to the religious authorities who failed in their responsibility to shepherd outcast worshippers by abandoning seminal Torah traditions and defining themselves as “holy” according to their preferred Torah traditions (56:8-12).66 We enumerate here De Hoop’s key premises.

It is difficult to reconcile a solely “comfort” reading of Isa 56:1-8(9) with its subsequent section, Isa 56:9—59:21, which is governed by “prophetic announcement of impending judgment.”67 This ostensible disjunction between Isa 56:1-8(9) and 56:9—59:21 has led literary critics to view 58:1-8 as a later addition that, by contrast, pronounces God’s

67. De Hoop, “Comfort or Criticism,” 672.
salvation and coming righteousness. De Hoop argues, contrarily, that Isa 56:1-8(9) is not an anomaly in its present literary context. He proposes that vv.8-9, traditionally broken down into 56:1-8 and 56:9-12, should be read as a janus-text that closes vv.1-9 positively, and opens the negative toned unit of vv.10-12 which reads:

The watchmen are blind, all of them, they perceive nothing. They are all dumb dogs that cannot bark; They lie sprawling, they love to drowse. Moreover, the dogs are greedy; they never know satiety. As for the shepherds, they know not what it is to give heed. Everyone has turned his own way, every last one seeks his own advantage. “Come, I’ll get some wine; let us swell liquor. And tomorrow will be just the same, or even much grander!” (Isa 56:10-12; JPS Tanak)

In v.8, then, Yahweh gathers the dispersed, and the animals in v.9 are welcomed to eat. Like the docile animals in Isaiah 11, their presence on the “mountain of Yahweh” is not threatening, but an eschatological picture of peace. However, it is precisely in Yahweh’s shepherding activities that serves as a rebuke to Jewish leaders: “The function of good shepherds” (56:11), probably among the self-centered (56:11) leaders (ד榈 רנים “shepherds” [56:11]), probably among the self-centered (57:10), wealthy Jerusalem upper class who exploited the lower socio-economical classes (58:7, 10) and arrogantly abused their power (57:14; 58:6, 9). These Jerusalem leaders, apparently connected to the temple cult, self-righteously separated themselves, announcing, “Keep to yourself, do not approach me, for I am holier than you!” (Isa 65:5, translation ours). But these cultic personnel were neither holy, nor righteous, by God’s standards: “In 66:3 a clear juxtaposition of legitimate cultic behavior and sinful conduct is found, describing the behavior of those bringing offerings but simultaneously also אֲבָחָשׁ תְּפֻרֶתּ בָּרוֹר (choosing what does not please me) (66:4; 65:12), which might be contrasted with the formulation in 56:4, 58:8 אֲבָחָשׁ תְּפֻרֶתּ בָּרוֹר, ‘who choose the things that please me.” 69 The Jerusalem leaders precluded members of the cultic community on the basis of “those elements in the Torah that suited themselves,” 70 elements which were authentic, but not core exhibitions of God’s justice and righteousness.

Mark’s temple cleansing account aligns ideologically with the socio-religious dynamics in Isaiah 56 in context. Mark portrays Jesus as definitive teacher of Torah with power (e.g. 1:21-22; 2:13; 4:1-2; 6:2, 6, 34; 8:31; 9:31; 10:1; 11:17; 12:35; 14:49), not unlike Matthew’s portrait. But more specifically, Mark’s Jesus understood Yahweh’s Torah expressly in Isainian terms. By retaining the integral phrase πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, against Matthew and Luke, Mark’s Jesus understood that Torah grants to Jews and non-Jews alike cultic prerogatives sanctioned by binding traditions rooted in just and right living. Conversely, those who endorse certain Torah traditions in order to secure their own cultic authority, while neglecting the very Torah traditions that promote God’s core ethical values, teach instead the “commandments of humans” and breed “vain worshippers” (Isa 29:13; 46:12; 57:8). In the spirit of Isaiah, Jesus citing Isa 29:13 confronts such corrupt leadership in Mark 7:5-9 and by citing Isa 56:7 with Jer 7:11 confronts this again in Mark 11:17. Abiding cultic prerogatives foundational to Torah, including Sabbath observance, joyful sacrificing, living justly and righteously, and devoted prayer, were granted to “all nations,” to covenant-keeping foreigners and eunuchs. But the decadent temple buyers-sellers and Jewish hierarchs behave as a “den of robbers” in the truest sense because they deny the “nations” these core Torah prerogatives that God had bestowed. Indeed, Jesus’ temple teaching confronted the temple establishment as is clearly depicted through investigating honor-shame cultural codes.
4. SOCIAL-CULTURAL TEXTURE: HONOR AND SHAME IN JESUS’ CONFRONTATION IN MARK

Jesus’ radical actions in 11:15-16, his supplanting role as teacher in 11:17-18, and the abridged content of his teaching in 11:17, collaboratively function to shame the Jewish temple authorities. Mark’s narrative description reflects honor-shame values in the first century Palestinian context.72 Jesus by his adverse actions in this pericope persistently challenges the acquired honor of the buyers and sellers (11:15–16). The episode, however, does not conclude with Jesus’ actions in 11:16, but focuses upon Jesus’ teachings in 11:17. Mark here uses the imperfect tense with a progressive, iterative sense “and he was teaching” (καὶ ἐδίδασκεν), and in so doing envisions Jesus’ “didactic authority” over the temple audience, particularly the buyers and sellers (11:15-16), but also the chief priests and experts in the law (11:18).73 The latter group immediately plotted to destroy Jesus on the basis of his actions and teaching, which suggests that Jesus’ acquired honor with the crowds jeopardized their ascribed honor. It is curious that the chief priests and scribes, not explicitly the buyers and sellers, are the ones who offer such a riposte to Jesus’ challenge. We must assume that the chief priests and scribes in some way authorized the actions of the buyers and sellers. The subsequent extended scenes of challenge and riposte in Mark 11-12 between Jesus and the temple authorities suggests the latter viewed themselves as “equal or almost equal in honor” to Jesus.74

By assuming the role of authoritative teacher with power, Jesus challenges the acquired honor of the buyers and sellers and the chief priests and scribes.75 The Greek constructions are highly rhetorical. Mark is the only Evangelist to retain the negative οὐ (cf. Matt 21:13; Luke 19:36) with the intensive perfect (also in Matt 21:13 and Luke 19:36) to express the rhetorical question “Is it not written...?” (οὐ γέγραπται) which stressed the binding nature of Scripture. Since this rhetorical question expects a positive answer with οὐ, why would the Markan Jesus even ask it? It is forceful. To the audiences of Mark’s Gospel, such a rhetorical question would have been seen as insulting to the buyers-sellers, chief priests and scribes. Whereas in 11:15-16 Jesus challenged them by his actions, now in 11:17 he challenged the integrity of the temple system of buying and selling as a misaligned from, or even a distortion of, Scripture, especially Isa 56:7. Similarly, earlier in Mark 7:6-7 Jesus had cited Isa 29:13 when confronting the Pharisees and the scribes because they adhered to “the commandments of humans” and their traditions rather than to “the commandment of God” (7:8-9). So, too in 11:17 while Jesus orally recited Jer 7:11 and Isa 56:7 to his auraliterate audience, he was also acting scriba-literately by authoritatively interpreting religious texts for the community; in this act he supplanted the chief priests and scribes in one of their defining socio-religious functions.76 Jesus thus shames and supplants the chief priests and scribes not merely to win in a challenge-riposte situation, but in alignment with the Isaian vision, in order to symbolically clear out the “commercial activity and traffic” from the outer courtyard to create a space “for those for whom it had been intended.”77

In addition to Jesus’ actions and manner of teaching, the very content of Jesus’ temple discourse as summarized in 11:17 should also be understood within this honor-shame value system. He reaffirms that the temple, Yahweh’s (or Jesus’) house, was to be characterized as a place for all nationalities to come and pray (οἶκος προσευχῆς κληθῆσαι πᾶσιν τοῖς έθέσειν) or where Jews, not least Jewish leadership, would pray for the benefit of non-Jews (cf. Gen 12:1-3). The buyers-sellers and the chief priests and scribes not only neglected this Isaian “pan-

73. Gundry describes the compiling of imperfective tense verbs describing Jesus’ acting (not permitting) and teaching and saying (οὐκ ἔριζεν... ἐδίδασκεν...ἔλεγεν) as a “didactic authority” which Mark is stressing (Mark, 640).
75. Gundry, Mark, 640-41. Gundry concludes that the main point of Mark is “the awe-inspiring power of Jesus’ teaching, backed up as it is by his strong actions... the power for which he will be crucified is a power that he exerts for the benefit of all the nations, Gentiles as well as Jews” (641).
76. Lucretia B. Yaghjian explains that scriba-literacy was intended “for technical, professional, or religious purposes on behalf of a particular interpretive community or ‘school’” (“Ancient Reading,” The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation [ed. R. Rohrbaugh; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996], 209).
77. Incigneri corroborates his view by referencing two passages in Josephus’ Jewish War (2.409-10; 6.124-26) that depict the Roman contempt for the Jewish practice, by rebels and customs, of excluding Gentiles from sacrificing and worshipping at the Jerusalem Temple. Mark, then, sides with the Roman disdain for these practices as God decrees through Jesus’ Temple cleansing the Temple’s destruction in AD 70 (Gospel to the Romans, 140-41). Against Incigneri’s view, see, David Seeley, “Jesus’ Temple Act,” CBQ 55 (1993): 269.
By confronting corrupt leadership and establishing justice for the nations.


Jesus symbolically acted and was teaching to affirm these prerogatives not because the Gentile God-fearers were superior to their Jewish counterparts, but because these Gentiles from among all nations belonged to those who had resolved “to join themselves to Yahweh, to minister to him, and to love the name of Yahweh, to be his servants” (Isa 56:6). And yet, Jesus’ teaching interwove Isa 56:7 with Jer 7:11, in order to restate Isaiah’s critique alongside Jeremiah’s indictment and prediction of the first temple’s destruction. In so doing, Jesus forecasts the impending and tragic divine judgment upon the second temple, which Jesus explicitly describes in Mark 13. This judgment would occur because of the failure to carry forth Yahweh’s mission to the nations.

In reciting Isa 56:7, Jesus refers to the Temple (τὸ ἱερόν) metonymically as “my house” (ὁ οἶκός μου), which in Third Isaiah’s context referred to Yahweh’s house. Was Jesus intending more than a prophetic critique by teaching on Isa 56:7 and Jer 7:11? Why did religious authorities respond with plotting to destroy him (11:18)? What is Mark representing in his narrative about Jesus’ sacred identity? Throughout Mark’s narrative, Jesus’ statements and actions which assume divine prerogative were often recognized as such and resulted either in charges of blasphemy for claiming God’s status or immediate plotting to destroy Jesus, the punishment for such blasphemy. For example, Jesus forgives sins (2:5-7), but the scribes charge in 2:7: “He blasphemes! Who can forgive sins, except One, namely, God?!” (βλασφημεῖ· τίς δύναται ἀφιέναι ἁμαρτίας εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός;). Jesus is “Lord of the Sabbath” (2:23–3:6) and “the Pharisees straightaway with the Herodians were giving counsel against him, how they would destroy him” (3:6). In Mark 14:61-64, when Jesus is asked by the high priest if he was the Messiah, Jesus indicated so (ἐγώ εἰμι “I am”) followed by a statement that combined Dan 7:13 and Ps 110:1. The response of the high priest was to tear his clothes and exclaim: “You have heard the blasphemy! What is clear to you?” Well, all of them condemned him to be worthy of death” (14:64). Thus, in 11:17-18 Jesus’ claim over the temple (v.17) followed immediately by a response to destroy him (v.18) aligns well with the Markan portrayal of Jesus: Jesus not simply speaks on behalf of Yahweh, but provocatively assumes divine prerogative over temple functions in such a way that the “my” refers to himself. Indeed, Jesus’ actions at the temple “constitutes the most obvious act of messianic praxis within the gospel narratives.”

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79. We might also place 12:9-12 in this list, in which Jesus presumes himself to be the rejected stone that becomes the basis of a new temple; the religious authorities respond with wanting to arrest him.

80. Wright, Jesus, 490-93 at 490.

For Jesus to act as judge of his people would be to claim the divine prerogative more openly and more boldly than ever before, and of course, this is precisely what Mark intends to assert: for him Jesus is God, no less.... In all this, we can appreciate that the structure of Mark 11,12 [chs.11-12] reveals an image of a Jesus who assumes the rôle of God as both plaintiff and judge of his people—a symbolism which is ultimately deutero-Isaianic. 

If Jesus was speaking self-referentially that the temple is “his” house, then Jesus is God in person, “the Lord suddenly come to His temple.” Such a view reflects Mal 3:1b, implied by the quotation of Mal 3:1a in Mark 1:2 that frames the entire Gospel account. Jesus’ travel to the Jerusalem temple, then, fulfills how Mark began his gospel, in which Mal 3:1a is conjoined with Isa 40:3 and named together as a quotation from Isaiah. So, Mark 11:1-19 is a high point within Mark’s Gospel that affirms Jesus as the Lord coming to the temple to fulfill the Isaian vision to allow all nations to worship Yahweh, while simultaneously warning of judgment. As Mark’s Gospel continues, Jesus will present himself as a temple space erected after judgment occurs: “the stone rejected has become the capstone” (Mark 12:10; Ps 118:22). In this way, Mark’s Gospel shows how all nations will worship Yahweh in the sacred space that is Jesus the Messiah.


83. Perrin is correct to summarize two essential questions concerning Jesus’ temple actions and teaching: “Who legitimately speaks for the temple? What does it mean to be the temple? Jesus did as much to show his answers to both these questions as he did to speak them. In fact, it is no overstatement to say that both these questions drove all that he did” (Jesus the Temple, 112). But Perrin here leaves unexplained that Jesus’ showing entailed his divine prerogative concerning the temple’s purpose and practices.