

“Let the Reader Understand”: A Contextual Interpretation of Mark 13:14

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Robert Fowler argues that the clause “let the reader understand” in Mark 13:14 is an example of “parenthetical comment by the narrator to the reader.” It is unique because it addresses the recipient of the story directly. As a result this comment could not be part of Jesus’ discourse. In contrast, this article argues that this clause is part of Jesus’ discourse because its language fits the way that Jesus in Mark challenges people to read—that is, interpret correctly—the Old Testament. This statement fits well with Jesus’ frequent corrections of his disciples’ misunderstandings. The third-person form parallels other instructions that Jesus gives to his disciples. The need for understanding occurs in two other contexts where Jesus is talking with his disciples. Jesus wants them to understand correctly his use of the phrase “the abomination of desolation.” Readers of discourse also hear the injunction.

Key Words: Markan discourse, authentic words of Jesus, abomination of desolation, parenthetical comment

The narrator of Mark’s Gospel often provides editorial comments to insure that the reader or listener grasps the point of the story. Robert Fowler has outlined the various ways in which “explicit commentary” occurs in the text: the title and epigraph; the epitome (1:14–15); as well as “interpretation” (“commentary on the story by the narrator”) marked by parenthesis, anacoluthon, and weaker signals (καί, δέ, or apposition).¹

Fowler begins his survey of explicit commentary with reference to Mark 13:14, “But when you see the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be (*let the reader understand*), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.”² For him this is “the clearest example in the Gospel of a comment by the narrator on the discourse.”³ It is an example of “parenthetical comment by the narrator to the reader” but distinguished from other examples because “it is the only place in the Gospel

1. Robert Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand: Reader-Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark* (Harrisburg, PA.: Trinity Press International, 1996): 81–120.

2. As quoted in *ibid.*, 83.

3. *Ibid.*

that the storyteller calls the recipient of the story by name." He is certain of this and states that "the word *reader* makes the parenthetical remark impossible as a statement by Jesus at the story level because characters within the story do not address 'the reader' outside the story, at least not in ancient literature." He concludes that "the parenthesis makes no sense at all as a statement by Jesus."⁴

This perspective is accepted by the majority of recent commentaries on Mark's Gospel.⁵ With the growing appreciation of the Markan author's ability and a desire to discern more clearly his rhetorical purposes, interpreters have shown greater willingness to accept statements such as 13:14 as editorial commentary from the author or narrator to the reader, rather than as statements internal to the world of the story. Of course, this kind of interpretation is not a new idea. H. B. Swete noted that "the words may be either those of the Lord directing attention to the passages in Daniel, or those of the writer of a document on which both Mc. and Mt. drew, directing attention to the Lord's words in this place."⁶ Most interpreters today would regard the Markan author as the source of this comment, which is a parenthesis directed to the reader by the narrator, and certainly not part of the character's discourse.

It is clear that the Markan narrator did at times include commentary in his story. For example, the fact that Aramaic or Hebrew expressions included in the text are provided with an interpretation (for example, 7:11) is a clear indication of this literary practice. Interpretations of this sort make no sense as part of the discourse by the characters in the story and are given for the sake of the readers. Parenthetical editorial comments seem to occur at 2:10, 3:30, and 7:19. None of these comments refers the reader or listener to another text as the key for interpreting the event or comments embedded in the story.

Characters in the narrative, particularly Jesus, do from time to time direct other characters to read materials, especially those in the Jewish canon. Such directions usually come in the form of a negative rhetorical question, "Have you not read . . . ?" but a question that expects a positive answer. These other contexts do not normally enter into the current discussions about the meaning and intent of Mark 13:14. Narrative readings

4. All of these excerpts are from *ibid.*

5. For example, Craig Evans comments, "This parenthetical comment is Markan (see his other insertions in 2:10; 3:30; 7:11, 19) and may be intended to alert readers to Dan. 12:5-13" (*Mark 8:27-16:20* [WBC 34B; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001], 320).

6. H. B. Swete, *Commentary on Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Kregel, 1977), 305. Whether the comments come from the author of a literary source or from the Markan author, the result is the same—these words do not belong to the story world. He adds "but the former supposition is almost excluded by the fact that in Mc.—the earlier narrative—no mention is made of Daniel or any prophetic writing." Vincent Taylor (*The Gospel according to St. Mark* [2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker, 1981], 511) comments that "alternatively and perhaps more probably, it is interpreted as a pointed allusion to the Book of Dan. Made explicit in Mt. xxiv.15. . . . But it is doubtful if even this explanation is complete. The parenthesis reads more like a dark hint, a clue to Christian eyes but an enigma to others, presumably the imperial authorities."

of Mark, however, should lead us first to ask whether the reference to reading in 13:14 is coherent with these other directions to characters in the story before hypothesizing that "let the reader understand" can only be a direction to the reader of the Markan story. In this article I will review these other references to reading in Mark's narrative, as well as the motif of understanding, and seek to demonstrate that 13:14 should be considered one of this series of references to OT materials and their proper interpretation, and that it is part of the character's discourse.

In four sections of his narrative, the Markan author uses the verb ἀναγνώσκω with the sense of reading. Three of these occur in contexts where Jesus, as the protagonist, is in controversy with various Jewish leaders:

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| 2:25 | οὐδέποτε ἀνέγνωτε τί ἐποίησεν Δαυὶδ |
| 12:10 | οὐδὲ τὴν γραφὴν ταύτην ἀνέγνωτε |
| 12:26 | οὐκ ἀνέγνωτε ἐν τῇ βίβλῳ Μωϋσέως |

In 2:25 the Jewish religious leaders are named "Pharisees" (2:24), in 12:10 they are the "high priests, scribes and elders" (11:27), and in 12:26 Jesus is interacting with "the Sadducees" (12:18). In all three cases Jesus appeals to elements in the Jewish canon, offers a specific, somewhat unusual interpretation, and uses this as the basis to deal with religious question and criticism—challenges addressed to him and his mission in the Markan narrative.

The use of a collection of sacred writings as the basis for religious life, while not unique in antiquity, certainly set Jews apart from the mainstream of Greco-Roman religion. Perhaps the nearest analogies would be the appeal by Greco-Roman authors to the Homeric cycle for moral and practical wisdom and the use of the founding stories of Rome. Philo discovers in his comparative studies of the Jewish stories and the philosophical traditions ascribed to Plato and Socrates similar, parallel streams of moral and civic wisdom. However, within Judaism, the appeal to the community's own sacred writings was a central element in any religious discussion. We see this in the documents from Qumran as time and again the authority of the sacred writings becomes the basis for community rules, community hope, and rationale for distancing from other Jewish religious traditions. The Sadducees and Pharisees differed fundamentally, according to first-century sources, precisely over their understanding of the value of certain segments of the sacred writings. The Sadducees placed special value on the Pentateuch. The Pharisees agreed, but then also regarded as sacred the writings of the Prophets and the Wisdom materials. Very precise rules were followed in interpreting these materials. Resolution to religious conflict often depended upon a person's ability to interpret these sacred writings in convincing and perhaps unusual ways.⁷

7. The Qumran pesher hermeneutic would qualify as one of these interpretive practices. The so-called "scribes" presumably had specific expertise in these various interpretive processes and thus gained their religious status from this ability and skill.

It is not unexpected then that the Markan narrator, given this strong Jewish tradition and the Jewish setting of the story, would have his protagonist engage other Jewish religious leaders in debates regarding specific sacred texts. This would be a normal means for establishing his hero's bona fides as prophet and perhaps even messianic leader, establishing justice and righteousness through his understanding of, teaching about, and personal modeling of these sacred precepts and stories.

In the first instance (2:23–28) the narrator has the Pharisees ask Jesus why he permits his disciples to “do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?” Jesus’ response first is an appeal to the sacred writings, in particular the actions of David. Jesus’ challenge is quite pointed: “Have you never read what David did . . . ?” The second-person plural form of the verb is very direct, and this is emphasized as well in the initial adverb, οὐδέποτε. Of course, the form of the question assumed that they had read this story many times. But Jesus appeals to this account of David’s action in eating the bread of the presence, something reserved for the priests, as precedent for his action.⁸ His argument seems to be that, if David, with God’s apparent blessing, could adjust the religious traditions because of his mission, then Jesus could as well because he, as son of man, is “Lord of the Sabbath.” Within this response Jesus implicitly compares himself with King David and suggests that a new Jewish leader, comparable to their ancestor David, is on the scene.

The other two occurrences⁹ are in another cycle of conflict stories (11:46–12) in the temple, which parallels the initial series of conflict stories (2:1–3:6). The high priests, scribes, and elders challenge Jesus’ authority to do and say the things he has done and said in the temple.¹⁰ Jesus responds by recasting the Isaiah vineyard song (Isa 5:1–7). He ends this “parable” with an appeal to Ps 118:22–23, in which the rejected stone becomes the cornerstone, and “this has happened from the Lord” (v. 11). What greater authority does Jesus require? He prefaces his appeal to Scripture with the words “have you never read this scripture . . . ?”¹¹ These verses became very significant messianically in the early church, being quoted frequently in the NT to explain why Jesus was not accepted as Messiah—it was part of God’s mysterious plan.

The third occurrence (12:26) is when Jesus responds to a question from the Sadducees regarding the resurrection. The Sadducees did not believe in resurrection, and so they challenged Jesus’ teaching about this. Jesus

8. The Matthew parallel (12:3) uses the same wording; Luke (6:3) has the same verb form but uses οὐδέ. Matthew includes a second OT passage that Jesus introduces, also with the words οὐκ ἀνέγνωτε (12:5).

9. Matthew uses this expression also in 19:4 (οὐκ ἀνέγνωτε) in the controversy about divorce and in 21:16 (οὐδέποτε ἀνέγνωτε) as Jesus responds to the high priests and scribes who criticize him for failing to curtail the enthusiastic response of the crowds.

10. In the Markan narrative, the question of Jesus’ authority is the constant issue between himself and the Jewish leaders.

11. At this point Matthew (21:42) follows Mark’s language. Luke (20:17), in contrast, reads τί οὖν ἔστιν τὸ γεγραμμένον τοῦτο.

responds with the rhetorical question "οὐκ ἀνέγνωτε ἐν τῇ βίβλῳ Μωϋσέως,"¹² referring them to the burning bush episode (Exod 3) and God's self-definition as "God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob," which in his view demonstrates that the righteous continue to have a relationship with God beyond death, and this implies resurrection.

When Jesus questioned the religious leaders in each of these Markan contexts (and others), he obviously knew that they had read these passages. The question was, rather, had they read them with the understanding that he considered proper. The assumption apparently was that, if they were the interpreters of the Jewish Scriptures that they claimed to be as well as the spiritual leaders of the Jewish people that they desired to be, then surely they would be more percipient in linking the events surrounding Jesus with the scriptural indicators and agree with Jesus' interpretations. Their failure to do so displays their stubbornness and envy, according to the Markan author, who emphasizes the theme of hardness of heart.

Other religious conflicts arise in the narrative¹³ where Jesus appeals to the sacred writings (that is, 7:1–20; 10:1–12) and assumes that his opponents (Pharisees, some of the scribes) are conversant with specific Scripture passages that he interprets in surprising ways. Isaiah's oracle of judgment (29:13) becomes Jesus' word of criticism against the Jewish religious leaders' inconsistent application of sacred principles (Mark 7:1–20). In ch. 10 Jesus links Moses' instructions regarding divorce with the creation account of marriage to signal God's true intent about marriage and his subsequent permission for divorce, although it is rooted in human "hard-heartedness."¹⁴

In each of these three primary Markan contexts (as well as Matt 12:3, 5; 19:4; 21:16, 42; 22:31; Luke 6:3) a similar pattern emerges. Jesus is engaged in his usual ministry practices, various Jewish religious leaders challenge his actions or teachings, and Jesus' defense is embedded in his interpretation of Jewish Scripture. He then criticizes these Jewish leaders for their failure to grasp God's intent in these writings. It is assumed that, if they did really understand God's purposes, they would have interpreted these Scriptures as Jesus now does. Recognizing Jesus' actions in the light of these scriptures, they should have then responded positively to his mission. The narrator gives hints that in fact they did realize these connections but refused to accept them.¹⁵ In each case Jesus uses a negative form of οὐ

12. Matthew has the same expression (22:31). Luke does not have this expression (20:37).

13. Luke uses the verb once more (10:26) where, in the parallel to Mark 12:25, the Lukan author has Jesus respond to the religious expert's question with another question: ἐν τῷ νόμῳ τί γέγραπται; πῶς ἀναγινώσκεις.

14. The Matthean parallel omits Mark 10:3–5 but adds in Jesus' answer to the question, οὐκ ἀνέγνωτε ὅτι. These words are not in the Markan account.

15. Consider the way the religious leaders affirm that Jesus in fact "teaches truly the way of God" (12:14). Undoubtedly the author intended these words to be taken ironically, but they suggest a deeper understanding about Jesus than the religious leaders publicly care to admit.

in a question that expects, ironically, a positive answer—yes, in fact they had read these materials but obviously, in Jesus' view, had not understood their intent adequately. The referent to the Jewish Scriptures may be specified by episode (2:25) or by book (12:26) or by text (12:10).¹⁶

The fourth occurrence of ἀναγινώσκω is in 13:14. The setting is different. Jesus is addressing four of his disciples (Peter, James, John, and Andrew). This is his last major statement to his followers in the second Gospel. This discourse culminates his temple ministry and is Jesus' explanation for his surprising prophecy in 13:2: "You see these great buildings? Stone upon stone that has never been thrown down shall never be left here." The strong negatives emphasize the fact that these huge foundation stones that have never known destruction will be torn down and left in disarray. In the midst of his explanation, Jesus refers to a specific event that his followers should recognize ("the abomination that causes desolation standing where he should not," 13:14). When they see it, they must flee Jerusalem so that they are not caught up in its cataclysmic destruction. As Jesus mentions this desolating event, the words "let the reader understand" (ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοεῖτω) occur in the text.¹⁷

The question that has intrigued interpreters is this: does the Markan narrator want his reader or listener to consider these words part of Jesus' discourse, or is the narrator providing explicit commentary to his reader, a kind of editorial parenthesis? Could these words in some sense fulfill both functions?

Given the way that the narrator has used ἀναγινώσκειν thus far, as well as the parallel uses in Matthew and Luke, the initial encouragement for the reader would be to take its use in 13:14 in the same sense as the three prior uses—a direction to the participants engaged in the dialogue. However, several factors in this context create uncertainty about this. First, Jesus is speaking with his intimate followers, not in a confrontation with Jewish religious leaders. Second, the structure of the statement is a third-person singular imperative, not a second-person plural indicative. The third-person imperative is normally used to give direction to a party that is different from the one being addressed. So this raises the third issue: if Jesus intends this instruction for his intimate followers, why did he not use the second-person imperative? The last factor is the lack of reference to a specific OT text here. In the other three contexts Jesus has identified the OT material (David's action, a specific quotation, Moses' experience), but he does not do this here, unless he assumes that the preceding expres-

16. Luke uses the term once in a different context (καὶ ἀνέστη ἀναγνῶναι, 4:16), when he describes how Jesus reads from the Isaiah scroll in the synagogue at Nazareth during a worship service. Jesus arouses controversy by his interpretation of the passage from Isaiah that he reads.

17. In Matthew's Gospel the parallel passage (24:15) has a specific reference to Daniel (τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ Δανιὴλ τοῦ προφήτου ἐστὸς ἐν τόπῳ ἁγίῳ, ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοεῖτω) followed by an instruction that the one who reads this text needs to understand it correctly. Luke has no instruction in his parallel (21:20).

sion is a sufficiently clear allusion to Daniel that requires no further specification. If we are to read these words then as part of Jesus' discourse in Mark's narrative, we must deal with these issues.

Mark makes it quite clear that Jesus is speaking with his intimate followers and not with Jewish religious leaders. The preceding narrative, however, has portrayed Jesus in multiple controversies with these leaders, ending in a strong word of condemnation (Mark 12:38–40). In each of these controversies a loaded question is asked by some Jewish religious group. Jesus responds in way that surprises and stops further debate. Finally, Jesus himself asks them a question for which no answer is given. So the prior narrative has been structured in a question–answer format. When we come to Mark 13, the discourse begins with the exclamation of the disciples about the monumental construction of the temple and Jesus' prophecy that it will all be destroyed. This stimulates four of Jesus' intimate followers to ask, "When will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to happen?" (13:4). Just as Jesus' actions in the temple generate critical questions from the Jewish religious leaders, so here Jesus' prophecy causes his followers to question. The difference seems to lie in the questioners' intentions, as well as in the motive behind the way Jesus responds. In fact we move from contexts of controversy to the context of a master instructing his followers.

But even in these instructions to his disciples, there is controversy. All through Mark's narrative we have seen the difficulty Jesus' followers have in understanding his message. At times there is sharp difference (that is, Peter's rejection of Jesus' prophecy about his death in Jerusalem in 8:31–33; the disciples question Jesus' view of the connection between wealth and kingdom membership in 10:23–26). And so we frequently find Jesus struggling to correct the misunderstanding of his followers. It is quite conceivable that in this context, as the author characterizes Jesus' prophesying about Israel's future and alluding to Jewish sacred texts in ways that would generate shock and dismay for any Jewish person, Jesus would think it necessary to warn them to understand these forecasted events as coherent with what they read in their sacred Scriptures.

This is not the first time in Mark's narrative that Jesus uses a third-person singular imperative in a discourse with his followers. The proverbial expression "let the person who has ears to hear, hear" (4:9, 23) encourages his followers to examine closely the parables he tells in order to discern their intent properly. However, no commentator would suggest that this is the narrator's editorial commentary. When Jesus expresses the key principle of discipleship in 8:34, he expresses it in terms of a third-person singular imperative, even as he addresses his followers. If in other discourses with his followers Jesus can provide instruction generically through use of third person singular imperatives, why is this not the case in 13:14? As a narrative strategy the use of a third-person imperative in the discourse of Jesus encourages the reader or listener to apply such instruction to him/herself. However, it is also a rhetorical strategy that a good

teacher like Jesus might use to express a general truth that would include his intimate followers but also could extend beyond that circle to others.

It is also important to note that the primary verb¹⁸ that the author uses here (νοεῖτω, 13:14) occurs in two other Markan settings (7:18; 8:17).¹⁹ In both cases Jesus is addressing his disciples and upbraiding them for their failure to grasp his teaching and the significance of his miracles. In these contexts he uses other terms as well such as ἀσύνετος, ἔχειν τὴν καρδίαν πεπωρωμένην, οὐ βλέπετε, οὐκ ἀκούετε to describe their obduracy. Thus when Jesus uses it again in 13:14 as he teaches his disciples, we should not be surprised or find it necessary to identify this clause as an editorial comment. The theme of the disciples' failure to understand Jesus' message runs throughout Mark's narrative and, if one considers 16:8 as the ending of this story, is never resolved.

It is also important to observe that in the clause under discussion ("let the reader understand"), the narrator is focusing on the issue of understanding, not the issue of reading. While these two activities, understanding and reading, are certainly connected, the force of the imperative is related to understanding in contrast to reading. This makes this text somewhat different from the other three contexts in this Gospel's narrative, where the verb ἀναγινώσκειν is used as the finite verb in the clause.

If Jesus in using the third-person singular imperative is obliquely addressing his current and future followers (as the narrator characterizes him), then what is it that they should understand in their reading? The Matthew narrative removes any ambiguity about this. As soon as Jesus mentions the phrase τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως, he modifies it with an adjectival participle introducing the prophet Daniel as the source (τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ Δανιὴλ τοῦ προφήτου)²⁰ and then adds further clarification with the adverbial participle ἐστὸς ἐν τόπῳ ἁγίῳ. But is this what Mark's author intended?

When we survey the ways in Mark's Gospel in which Jesus refers to OT materials in his discourses with his disciples, we discern a clear trend. The key passages would be Mark 4:10–12, ch. 13, and 14:22–31. Although Jesus alludes to OT materials in each of these discourses, the only marked reference occurs in 14:27, where Jesus confirms the desertion of his followers by quoting Zech 13:7, introducing it with ὅτι γέγραπται. In contrast when Jesus refers to OT materials in debate with Jewish religious leaders, almost always the references are marked as originating in their sacred writings. While this is not an absolute indicator, the trend is clear and sug-

18. It is perhaps useful to note that in Mark 13 Jesus uses the third-person singular imperative in 13:14, 15 (2x), and 16. In each case he identifies a subject that is more inclusive than just his followers but certainly could include them.

19. Matthew uses this verb in 15:17 (= Mark 7:18); 16:9, 11 (= Mark 8:17); and 24:15 (= Mark 13:14). Luke does not use this verb at all in the simplex form.

20. The Theodotion text of Dan 9:27 reads καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ ἱερὸν βδέλυγμα τῶν ἐρημώσεων. A similar phrase occurs in Dan 12:11: καὶ δοθήσεται βδέλυγμα ἐρημώσεως. The Hexaplaric text of Daniel has the same phrase in both contexts as well.

gests that the Markan narrator in Jesus' second major discourse to his disciples would not regard it as necessary to mark a quotation, in the same way that the Matthean author did. The point is this: the Markan narrator in Jesus' speech to his disciples uses a phrase from Daniel as part of the discourse. It comes at a critical point in Jesus' message. The "*abomination that causes desolation, standing where he should not*" identifies the time when his followers should abandon Jerusalem because God's judgment on the city is imminent. It is probable that Jesus in using this known Danielic phrase desires to place his own interpretation²¹ on its significance²² and thus warns the person who reads these prophecies (his immediate disciples and any others beyond this circle) to be sure they understand correctly as they read.

This interpretation of ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοεῖτω as a warning to understand the Jewish sacred writings fits well with Jesus' frequent warnings in this discourse for his followers not to be deceived. His initial statement (13:5) cautions them lest they be led astray. Specifically some will come and claim to be Messiah, and "they shall deceive many" (13:6). He repeats the warning in vv. 21–22. So the injunction νοεῖτω fits well with the general tenor of the discourse. The expectations of Jesus' followers with respect to the future of Jerusalem and its temple as well as their messianic expectations need to be modified and changed to conform to Jesus' interpretation.

As Jesus ends this discourse in the Markan narrative, we find the general admonition, "Now what I am saying to you, I say to all: keep awake!" (13:37). The use of the first person means that in terms of the story this verse must be considered part of Jesus' discourse, not an editorial commentary. This suggests that the author expected his readers or listeners to hear the words that Jesus addresses to his disciples, as if Jesus were speaking directly to them. Of course, this is quite compatible with other indications in the text of this story that Fowler and others have identified. But if this is the perspective of the narrator with respect to Jesus' words, then we have to consider the distinct possibility that the narrator had the same expectation for 13:14. In other words, this expression literarily does fit Jesus' discourse, but its application rhetorically is broader than his immediate followers. The two levels of the story come into play here as the narrator both retells the events and coaches the reader or listener to hear them correctly.

21. In the parallel discourse in Mark 4, Jesus uses the words of Isa 6:9–10 as the means to define his usage of parables. In doing so, however, he places his own interpretation on these words so that they define his mission specifically.

22. The use of the masculine participle to define a neuter noun in 13:14 may be precisely why Jesus warns the reader of Daniel to understand what the prophecy is truly describing. The abomination that causes desolation does not refer to an event (as it did in the case of Antiochus Ephiphanes' action in the temple referenced by 1 Macc 1:54) in the past but, rather, to some person and his experience, yet to be revealed, but equally devastating for Jerusalem and its temple.

As this brief review suggests, Fowler's judgment that "the parenthesis makes no sense at all as a statement by Jesus"²³ perhaps needs modification. The term ὁ ἀναγινώσκων is not directed first and foremost to the "recipient of the story," nor does it make "the parenthetical remark impossible as a statement by Jesus at the story level." Rather, Jesus is directing any among his current disciples and those beyond this circle who read the Daniel materials related to the "abomination that causes desolation" to read them in the light of his interpretation and thus to read them with understanding. They certainly have application to future followers of Jesus who read the Markan narrative, and in this sense Jesus speaks "to his intranarrative [and extranarrative] audience."²⁴ I am not sure that this expression "forces upon us the distinction between the narrator and his protagonist," as Fowler would require.²⁵

Fowler argues that "characters within the story do not address 'the reader' outside the story, at least not in ancient literature."²⁶ This forces then a decision about 13:14—either the narrator in this setting contravenes ancient practice and has a character address his readers directly or else these words form explicit, parenthetical commentary by the narrator addressed to the readers. But this is not the only conclusion possible. As this article has sought to show, if the terms used, the concern regarding correct understanding, and the inclusion of a reference to Danielic material in 13:14 all conform to patterns found elsewhere in the Markan narrative and fit the way the protagonist speaks and functions, then we can postulate that the narrator conforms fully to ancient practice but invites the reader or listener to identify with the immediate followers of Jesus and respond as they were expected to.

23. Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand*, 83.

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*