

THE MESSIANIC SACRED, NOT SECRET: THE SON AS A HIDDEN NAME IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK

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The secrecy motif in the Gospel of Mark has been studied for over a hundred years since William Wrede brought it to the scholarly attention, terming it the *messianic secret*. The messianic secret refers to how Jesus frequently forbade demons and followers from revealing who he was, how he frequently forbade publicizing his miracles, and how he often taught in parables in order to obscure the full meaning of his teachings. The reason for all this secrecy is not overtly stated in the text of Mark, and scholarly consensus on the issue is far from settled. While not a unifying framework for the messianic secret, Mark's use of "Son" may be an interpretive key for understanding some of Mark's enigmatic secrecy motifs. The Gospel of Mark casts "Son" as a sacred and identifying title for Jesus Christ, which he receives at baptism, which he keeps hidden from the profane, and which is ultimately revealed at the cross. This name is used as a device to highlight the ironic recognition of demons, the misunderstanding of the disciples, and the ultimate access humanity has to Jesus Christ's sacred and salvific identity as the Son of God through committed, covenantal discipleship.

In this paper, I seek to perform a Latter-day Saint reading of the Gospel of Mark to parse out ways that "Son" is used in sacred and concealed contexts. As this will be a narrative critical reading, I will not be addressing the dating, authorship, textual critical issues, or

compositional history of Mark. However, all of these approaches may provide fruitful ground for further research.

After reviewing the history and status of the messianic secret theory, I will analyze how the name “Son” is first revealed by the Father to Jesus Christ in a prophetic call at baptism. This exchange initiates Jesus into a form of the divine council while endowing him with authority and the Holy Spirit. I will then analyze how Jesus maintains the sanctity of the sacred name by silencing and exorcising many of the demons who claim to know his true identity. I will then move on to scenes where disciples in Jesus’s inner circle fail to understand his sacred identity, such as at the Transfiguration. The demonic understanding of Jesus’s hidden identity highlights the disciples’ persistent misunderstandings of who Jesus is despite Jesus’s earnest attempts to reveal himself. Finally, I will demonstrate how the crucifixion is the climactic revelation of Jesus’s sacred identity and how it enables all who enter into The Way¹ to gain access to Jesus Christ’s identity as the Son of God.

The Gospel of Mark and the Messianic Secret

The messianic secret is a motif proposed to be in the Gospel of Mark that Jesus deliberately tried to maintain an element of secrecy about himself and his work.² In the Gospel of Mark, he often rebukes demons to silence for speaking his name. After a healing, he warns the healed to not tell anyone about the miracle. He will even admonish his disciples to not speak about who he is. This air of secrecy around Jesus’s mission in the Gospel of Mark has been termed the *messianic secret* by William Wrede in his landmark 1901 publication.³ While many of the tenets of Wrede’s work are no longer accepted, his work has been influential in opening up different readings for the Gospel of Mark.

An early explanation for the pervasive secrecy in Mark is to attribute these actions to the historical Jesus. Jesus may have wanted to avoid publicity in order to be able to travel and teach without drawing the attention of the government.⁴ Others have posited that the secrecy explains “the failure of the majority of Jews to respond to Jesus.”⁵ The Jews ultimately rejected Jesus because he

never proclaimed who he was but rather kept his identity hidden.⁶ An epiphanic explanation proposes that despite Jesus's diligent attempts to keep his followers silent, Jesus's fame and glory spread abroad. This message communicates to the audience how irresistible and glorious the gospel of Jesus Christ is.⁷ Another explanation is that the secrecy motif serves to point readers to the cross as the sign of Jesus's identity as the Son of God. Whenever a character seeks to identify Jesus as the Son of God, the author of Mark silences the character to point the audience to the ultimate revelation of Jesus as the Son of God: the crucifixion.⁸ More recently, Adam Winn and David Francis Watson have put forth the argument that the messianic secret may be understood as a resistance to the Classical conception of Roman honor.⁹

A common critique of the messianic secret lies in its inconsistencies. Despite Jesus's best efforts to quell his fame, his notoriety spread throughout the land, defeating the purpose of his secrecy. Then, at times, Jesus commands a demon to silence or requests anonymity from those he healed; however, in other cases of healing or exorcism there are no prohibitions against declaring the miracle. For these and other reasons, scholars tend to move away from presenting a unifying framework for these enigmatic contradictions. Rather, it is common to compartmentalize the messianic secret into smaller units. Scholars attempt to analyze and make sense of certain parts of Mark's secrecy motifs rather than attempt to create a unified way to understand the Gospel.¹⁰ Several have persuasively argued that Mark's use of "Son of God" successfully brings together many aspects of these secrecy motifs.¹¹ When "Son" is analyzed as a hidden or concealed name in the Gospel of Mark, the messianic secret become less secretive and more sacred.

The Title "Son"

To be a son of God is, at its core, to inherit divinity and assume a form of deity. Proclamation of Jesus's sonship is tacit confirmation of his godhood. The title "Son" is the most common epithet for

Jesus in the Gospel of Mark, and most clearly conveys an intrinsic identity of having a patrilineal relationship.¹²

The title “Son” or “Son of God” is not necessarily messianic by nature but has distinct kingly associations. The kings of the ancient Near East were considered sons of gods and imbued with divinity.¹³ In reference to Israel’s king, YHWH declared, “Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee” (Psalm 2:7).¹⁴ The paternal relationship of the king with YHWH is again highlighted when Nathan prophesied of the king, “I will be his father, and he shall be my son” (2 Samuel 7:14).¹⁵

Therefore, the significance of the title “son” is additionally formed by the meaning with which the entire narrative imbues it. Edwin Broadbent explains how the Gospel of Mark builds the identity of Jesus as the Son:

The story expends little energy in direct defense or explication of the Son title since the story itself serves as commentary on the identity of the Son. As a result, various unattached details of the story line—wonders, controversies, teaching, other titles—become statements of Christology which operate under and explicate the titular claims of Mark 1.1 and 14.62. The narrative frame insists, with divine sanction, *that* Jesus is Son of God; the stories set within that frame tell *how* Jesus is Son of God. Through this strategy the narrative constructs the Son title as a complex, deeply nuanced christological image.¹⁶

In Latter-day Saint canon, “Son” gains additional prophetic and royal significance. In the Book of Mormon, the title “Son” is used frequently as part of formal prophecy about Jesus Christ; Book of Mormon prophets consistently foretell the coming of one “Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”¹⁷ “Son of God” is possibly part of a formal royal title, revealed by an angel first to King Benjamin and quoted by Samuel the Lamanite (Mosiah 3:8; Helaman 14:12).¹⁸ Benjamin prophesied that “he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary” (Mosiah 3:8).

The preeminence of the title “Son” in the Book of Mormon is underscored by how it is the preferred title for Jesus to introduce

himself.¹⁹ Before appearing to the Nephites in Bountiful, Jesus Christ almost seems to echo the prophesied royal title from King Benjamin when he famously introduced himself: “Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are. I was with the Father from the beginning. I am in the Father, and the Father in me; and in me hath the Father glorified his name” (3 Nephi 9:15).

In addition, “Son” seems to have connections to temple and priestly rituals, as both Alma and Nephi describe priesthood and sacrifice after the order of the Son.²⁰ Alma declared that for those whom God ordained, “they become high priests forever, after the order of the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father, who is without beginning of days or end of years, who is full of grace, equity, and truth.” (Alma 13:9).

Endowing Jesus with the title of “Son” not only has implications for his own identity but also that of his followers. Jesus Christ promises his followers that those who repent of their sins and embrace the gospel will have joint access to Jesus’s identity as a Son. In the Book of Mormon, King Benjamin preached that those who entered into the covenant became God’s (in this case Christ’s) sons and daughters, inheriting ultimate divinity upon their faithfulness (Mosiah 5:7).²¹

The Baptism as Initiation and Prophetic Call

In the Gospel of Mark, the name “Son” was first revealed by the Father to Jesus Christ at Jesus’s baptism.²² The baptism of Jesus served as a prophetic call narrative in which Jesus was initiated into a divine council. In Jesus’s encounter with deity, he was washed and anointed with the Holy Ghost. Jesus was further endowed with a sign of his call in the form of the dove and was granted a new name directly from Heaven: “my beloved Son”(Mark 10–11).

In Mark, baptism marks the beginning of Jesus Christ’s story.²³ In Christological terms, scholars have historically designated the baptism in Mark as Jesus’s adoption by the Father. Instead of approaching the baptism as an adoption, it may be more appropriate to interpret the baptism narrative as an initiation. This moment

initiated Jesus into a divine council and endowed him with a new identity (Mark 1:11) and authority (Mark 1:27).

When the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus like a dove, and the voice of God was heard (Mark 1:10–11), it echoed a Biblical prophetic call pattern by having a divine council experience.²⁴ In the Hebrew Bible and the Book of Mormon, ancient prophets were formally called into service by beholding an angelic vision of the heavenly hosts. Through this vision they were admitted into YHWH's divine council and were privy to God's mysteries.²⁵

This episode is admittedly different from typical prophetic call theophanies—there was no YHWH on his throne, and there were no concourses of angels. However, since YHWH was on the earth, it is expected that this divine council experience would be different. Instead of a mortal beholding the presence of YHWH, YHWH incarnate beheld the presence of the rest of the Godhead through the opening of the heavens with the voice of the Father and the presence of the Holy Ghost.

Indeed, Mark 1:10 hints at a heavenly ascent into this divine council. As Jesus ascended (ἀναβαίνων) from the water, the Holy Ghost descended (καταβαίνον) to meet him. The scene thus creates a dichotomous harmony of heaven and earth coalescing in divine communion. This communion transpired through the “tearing apart” (σχιζομένου) of the veil of heaven. The only other instance of tearing in the Gospel of Mark is in Mark 15:38, when the temple veil was torn asunder at the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The other similarities between these two episodes suggest that they are to be read in light of each other as bookends to Jesus's story. The baptism marks the initiation of Jesus's prophetic and priestly mission, and the crucifixion marks his final entrance into God's presence through the veil.²⁶

It is at this point that Jesus witnessed to the Messianic initiation by receiving a sacred name and a sign: “There came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11). God's voice heightened the sanctity and intimacy of this moment by addressing Jesus alone in a private encounter.²⁷ As Jesus formally accepted his new role as Messiah through a ritual

washing, the Father witnessed to his new status by sending the sign of the dove and bestowing a sacred name: my Son.²⁸

The Sign of the Dove

The Holy Ghost serves several functions in this narrative. First, the Holy Ghost acts as a messenger of Jesus's prophetic call. While the Father stays in heaven, the Holy Ghost comes down to initiate and christen Jesus as the Messiah for his mortal mission.

Second, the endowment of the Holy Ghost serves as an anointing as part of Jesus's initiation into his messianic role. The author of the book of Isaiah connected the Holy Ghost with anointing when he prophesied, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me" (Isaiah 61:1).²⁹ The author of the Acts of the Apostles more explicitly related the Holy Ghost with anointing at the baptism of Jesus: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts 10:38, NRSV).

Early Christian sources indicate that Jesus's baptism was seen as an anointing. John A. Tvedtnes argued,

Washing and anointing go together like baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost, which is called baptism by fire. Anciently, the oil was used to make fire in lamps and is hence a symbol of fire and also of the Spirit. This is why the Holy Ghost is often compared to anointing with oil and why, in early Christianity, anointing followed baptism.³⁰

Third, the descent of the Holy Ghost acts as a sign of Jesus's calling as the Messiah. The Gospel of John indicates that the descent of the Holy Ghost as a dove was a pre-determined sign by which John would recognize Jesus (John 1:32–34). Of interest to Latter-day Saints are the teachings of Joseph Smith in the Nauvoo period about the sign of the Dove. Departing from traditional interpretations,³¹ Joseph Smith asserted that the Holy Ghost did not descend from heaven, taking on the body of a dove. Rather, Smith taught that the Holy Ghost is a personage of Spirit, and at the baptism of Jesus, performed a designated, identifying sign to verify the baptism.³²

It appears that Joseph Smith's view of the dove, and its connection to sacred signs, developed between 1840 and 1843. On July 19, 1840 (and March 21, 1841), Joseph Smith gave a discourse on John the Baptist where he indicated that a dove sat on the shoulder of Jesus, signifying that He was of God.³³ However, instead of expounding on the imagery of the dove, he transitioned into a discussion on the recognition of angels through handclasps and signs. Much of this content was later reiterated in a revelation now known as Doctrine and Covenants 129 on February 9, 1843.³⁴ Joseph apparently saw some connection between the manifestation of the dove and signs or tokens that an angel might give as identification.

In 1842, the Facsimiles from the Book of Abraham were published in the Times and Seasons.³⁵ Joseph Smith translated Figure 7 of Facsimile 2, as follows: "Represents God sitting upon his throne, revealing through the heavens the grand Key-words of the Priesthood; as, also, the sign of the Holy Ghost unto Abraham, in the form of a dove." In the figure, a bird appears to present the seated god with a Wedjat-eye, the symbol of all good gifts.³⁶ Again, Joseph Smith seems to draw distinct connections between the dove and exchanges of ritually sacred information.

This concept was most fully developed by January 29, 1843, when Joseph gave a discourse on the meaning of the sign of the dove. In this discourse, he clearly explains that the Holy Ghost did not appear in the body of an actual dove but rather as a personage of Spirit, manifesting a certain sign named *the Dove*.³⁷ Thus, in this Latter-day Saint context, the visionary experience at the baptism of Jesus included the bestowal of a ritual sign. Upon receipt of a washing, anointing, and sign, Jesus also receives a name, which is to be kept sacred: the Son.

Exorcisms

After receiving this new name from the Father, Jesus maintained the sanctity of the sacred name by silencing and exorcising many of the demons who claimed to know his true identity. The demonic recognition of Jesus's hidden identity highlights the disciples' persistent misunderstandings of who Jesus is despite Jesus's earnest

attempts to reveal himself. When a demon or force of nature threatens Jesus's true identity, he often commands them to silence, and they obey. When Jesus similarly commands his disciples or those he healed to silence, they often misunderstand and publicize the miracle.³⁸ This dichotomy underscores the irony that the demons recognize who Jesus truly is, and yet his most ardent supporters fail to understand.

The interpretive key for understanding the secrecy of the exorcisms of Jesus is Mark 1:34 and Mark 3:10–12. Both passages are representative of iterative narrations of exorcism and healing as follows:

And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and *suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.* (Mark 1:34, emphasis added)³⁹

For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues. And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, *Thou art the Son of God. And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known.* (Mark 3:10–12, emphasis added)

The Gospel of Mark treats healings and exorcisms as separate categories, although there is considerable semantic overlap. Further, these passages specify that in cases of exorcism, Jesus habitually silenced them because they were privy to his sacred identity, namely the Son of God. The devils' proclamation of Jesus's identity, and Jesus's subsequent command to silence represents a struggle of power between two supernatural forces. The devils seek power over Jesus through wielding his concealed name, while Jesus exercises his superior power over them by casting them out.

The use of secret names to leverage power is a well-attested practice in ancient Near Eastern literature and mythology.⁴⁰ One of the more famous attestations is the tale of Isis and Re from the Ramesside period of Egypt. In this myth, Isis succeeds in gaining power over Re by persuading him to give her his true, hidden name in order to heal him of a snake bite.⁴¹ In the Greek Magical Papyri, demons and entities such as the moon are described as having

hidden names that contain power.⁴² Adela Yarbro-Collins draws on such comparative examples in her commentary on the exorcism in Mark 1:23–24, and synthesizes:

The unclean spirit is presented as attempting to gain control over Jesus. The spirit expects that the knowledge he has about Jesus will allow him to control Jesus and to resist being driven out of the man. . . . In the narrower context of the passage as a traditional exorcism, the words of the spirit constitute an attempt to exert power over Jesus. In the broader context of Mark as a whole, they are also revelatory of the identity of Jesus. The holiness of Jesus is the polar opposite of the uncleanness of the spirit.⁴³

Apart from the two summarizing passages listed above (Mark 1:34; 3:10–12), there are four discrete episodes of exorcism in the Gospel of Mark. Of these, two of them are outside the scope of this analysis because they do not include a command to silence, nor do they include a declaration of a divine name.⁴⁴ The pericopes to be analyzed here are Mark 1:23–27 and Mark 5:1–19 (see table below).

Table 1. Comparison of Four Pericopes.

Passage	Command to Silence	Divine Name Used by Demon
Mark 1:23–27	Yes	Holy One of God, Jesus of Nazareth
Mark 5:1–19	No	Son of the most high God
Mark 7:25–29	No	n/a
Mark 9:20–29	No	n/a

The Unclean Man in the Synagogue—Mark 1:23–27

In this first exorcism, Jesus expelled a demon from a man while in the synagogue and commanded the demon to silence. While others were commenting on Jesus’s superior authority, a man with an unclean spirit approached Jesus and called him both “Jesus of Nazareth” and “the Holy One of God” (ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ, Mark 1:24). This instance is distinct, as the unclean spirit deviates from

the standard of the demons identifying Jesus as the “Son of God.” (Mark 3:10–12).⁴⁵ Mark may be portraying Jesus as the Holy One of God as a way to underscore the authority he received at baptism, at which he initially received his title, “the Son.”

This first exorcism establishes Jesus’s authority through an *inclusio*, wherein both Mark 1:22 and 1:27 appeal to Jesus’s authority. Those in the synagogue were “astounded” because Jesus had authority wholly unlike that of the scribes. At the end of the pericope, the witnesses again speculated about Jesus’s sacred identity, Jesus having performed the miracle with a new teaching and authority. In fact, “the scene as a whole expresses the idea that both the teaching and power of Jesus to exorcise have their basis in the authority of Jesus.”⁴⁶

This exorcism further establishes Jesus’s authority in deviating from typical elements in the exorcism genre. Exorcism narratives often include elements such as meeting the demon, the demon recognizing the exorcist, and performing the exorcism by uttering an incantation or using the name of a powerful force.⁴⁷ Unlike typical exorcisms, Jesus casts the demon out without calling upon the name of any authority; his verbal commands have the self-sufficient authority needed to cast out demons.

Mark places emphasis not only on authority but also on the importance of Jesus’s name through a chiasm, where the turning point focuses on the two names of Jesus spoken by the unclean spirit. The proclamation of Jesus’s names serves as the high point of this scene and illuminates why Jesus commanded the spirit to silence. The unclean spirit knew Jesus’s identity and may have sought to control him by uttering a hidden name.⁴⁸ Jesus’s rebuke of the spirit highlights the importance for Jesus to keep his name hidden and sacred from the profane.

The specific title “Holy One of God” has priestly, prophetic, and divine associations. Psalm 106:16 designates Aaron, the archetypal high priest, as “the holy one of the Lord” (קָדוֹשׁ יְהוָה). Elisha the great prophet is similarly called a “holy man of God” (2 Kings 4:9, אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים קָדוֹשׁ). The Psalmist and Isaiah frequently refer to YHWH

as the “holy one of Israel.”⁴⁹ Most importantly, this title may be used

21 They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught.

22 They were *astounded* at his teaching, for he *taught* them as one having *authority*, and not as the scribes.

23 Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an *unclean spirit*,

24 and *he cried out*,

“What have you to do with us, *Jesus of Nazareth*? Have you come to destroy us?

I know who you are, the *Holy One of God*.”

25 But Jesus *rebuked him, saying*, “*Be silent*, and come out of him!”

26 And the *unclean spirit*, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him.

27 They were all *amazed*, and they kept on asking one another, “What is this? A new *teaching*—with *authority*! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.”

28 At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee. (Mark 1:21–28, NSRV)

to allude back to Jesus’s holy authority received at baptism. John the Baptist prophesied that Jesus would have authority to baptize with the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:8). Jesus then received that authority by the endowment of the Holy Spirit, certified by his reception of his new title of “Son” (Mark 1:10–11). As the bearer of the Holy Spirit and with the identity of the Son of God, Jesus has the authority to expel the unclean spirit.⁵⁰

According to Robert H. Stein,

In light of the similar demonic confessions in 3:11 and 5:7, the title “Holy One of God” (ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ, *ho hagios tou theou*) was probably understood by Mark as a synonym for “Son of God” and indicated the special relationship that existed between Jesus and God. Luke, who also has “Holy One of God”

in his parallel account (4:34), appears to have understood this title in the same way (1:35; 4:41).⁵¹

Through this exorcism, Mark's readers recognize Jesus as the son of God, the holy antithesis to the unclean spirit and the bearer of superior authority bestowed by the Father through the Holy Spirit.

The Gadarene Demoniac—Mark 5:1–19

This exorcism introduces some peculiar elements that underscore the power of hidden names both for Jesus in the title "Son" and for the demons. In this pericope, Jesus journeyed by the sea near the country of the Gerasenes when a possessed man exuberantly approached Jesus. The narrator described the dangerousness of this man, and Jesus attempted to exorcise the demon. It is at this point that the demon identified Jesus as "the Son of the most high God."⁵²

Unlike other episodes of exorcism, when the demons called Jesus "Son of the most high God" (Mark 5:7), there was no command to silence.⁵³ In other instances of exorcism, I argue that Jesus silenced the demons after they pronounced his name in order to prevent the demons from exerting power over him. However, this episode escalates the scope of Jesus's power and superiority, for he successfully performed the exorcism despite the use of Jesus's sacred name.

This exorcism presents a more menacing threat than previous encounters. Mark characterizes this man as particularly wild and possessed, and he takes a digression of several verses to describe the activities and pitiful state of the man (Mark 5:3–5). Mark describes the man as dwelling among graves, a location associated with ritual uncleanness, death, fear, and decay. The man had inhuman strength to be able to break chains and resist restraint. And the man elicits frightful misery, as he is described as "crying, and cutting himself with stones," while he wandered the mountains and the tombs (Mark 5:5).

Mark further heightens the challenge of the episode by having the demon appropriate exorcist behavior. After declaring Jesus's sacred name "Son," the demon exclaimed, "I adjure thee by God,

that thou torment me not” (Mark 5:7). The word rendered “adjure” in the King James Bible is the Greek word ὀρκίζω, “to make one swear” or “to administer an oath,” and is customarily used by an exorcist, not by the object of the exorcism (see Acts 19:13).⁵⁴ The demon, in his attempt to gain the upper hand, utilized Jesus’s hidden name *and* assumed the rhetorical posture of an exorcist.

In addition to the man’s altogether fearsome vignette, Mark raises the stakes of this exorcism by increasing the size of the demonic force. In the course of performing the exorcism, Jesus asked the demon for its name, a common element found elsewhere in the exorcism genre.⁵⁵ The demon revealed that its name was Legion and that it consisted of multiple spirits (Mark 5:9).

In the face of formidable opponent—formidable in visage, size, and behavior—Jesus nonetheless demonstrated superior power in his successful exorcism. This scene demonstrates that even if demons break from exorcism expectations, Jesus can be overpowered neither through possession of his sacred name, nor through large numbers, nor through special pleading. The “Son” only functions as a key word for righteous, covenanted, understanding disciples.

Misunderstanding the “Son”

Discipleship is a prominent theme in the Gospel of Mark. While the followers of Jesus frequently strive to be obedient and faithful, in the Gospel they are most often examples of how *not* to be a good disciple. In Mark’s Gospel, Jesus’s disciples lack the necessary faith to cast out devils, they underestimate Jesus’s power to perform miracles, and they do not always understand the meaning of Jesus’s obscure teachings. Most importantly, the disciples frequently misunderstand the identity and mission of Jesus—as the Son sent to die and conquer death. Since the disciples were members of the inner circle, Jesus sought repeatedly to reveal his identity and ultimate fate to them, but they would not understand.⁵⁶ Episodes of misunderstanding occur throughout the Gospel, but two paradigmatic examples occur in Peter’s Christological confession and the transfiguration. These misunderstandings highlight the concealed nature of Jesus’s identity and how faithful disciples can

and should be initiated into a knowledge of the mystery of the kingdom.⁵⁷

Peter's Christological Confession—Mark 8:27–38

Before analyzing the transfiguration scene, a brief study of Peter's Christological confession and the first passion predication is necessary. While Peter's confession (Mark 8:27–38) is separated from the transfiguration (Mark 9:1–8) by geographic space, narrative time, and a chapter division, the two are sequentially adjacent to each other and inextricably related. Peter's Christological confession, Jesus's passion prediction, and Peter's rebuke serve as a prologue to the greater revelation by God and to Peter's repeated bewilderment in the transfiguration.

When Jesus asked the disciples about his identity, Peter responded, "Thou art the Christ" (Mark 8:29). While "Christ" is not entirely equivalent to "Son," both titles have synonymous traditions which denote their meaning.⁵⁸ Thus, by recognizing Jesus as the "anointed one" (χριστός), Peter would have at least recognized Jesus as the one anointed by God at baptism to be his adopted son (not necessarily his divine son) because the Jews saw the Messiah, like the Davidic kings, as God's adopted son. This is met with Jesus commanding the disciples to silence. "The fact that Jesus' prohibition in Mark 8:30 is a reaction to Peter's confession in Mark 8:29 indicates that what the disciples—like the demons in Mark 1:25, 1:34, and 3:11–12—are not allowed to reveal is Jesus' identity."⁵⁹ However, the disciples differ from the demons significantly. The demons were compelled to silence because they attempted to control Jesus by unauthorized usurpation of his sacred identity. The disciples, on the other hand, were deliberately invited to utter this sacred knowledge, but were afterwards silenced to prevent them from revealing Jesus's sacred name and identity to the uninitiated.

Upon Peter's correct identification of this key identity, Jesus unlocked a mystery and told the disciples "quite openly" exactly what being the Son entails (Mark 8:32, NSRV). Without speaking in parables or concealed language (See Mark 4:11), Jesus explained plainly that he would suffer, die, and resurrect. Peter's response to this revelation betrayed his misunderstanding of the sacred knowledge bestowed upon him. In an unusual exchange reminiscent

of an exorcism, Peter attempted to silence or repress Jesus from saying such things, but Jesus responded with greater authority to reciprocally rebuke Peter, even going so far as to call him Satan (Mark 8:33).⁶⁰ Despite Peter's misunderstanding, this conversation about Jesus's identity served as preparation for Peter, James, and John to reach a deeper level of initiation in the transfiguration.

The Transfiguration—Mark 9:1–13

The transfiguration is a mid-point revelation of the Son in the book of Mark and one of the most significant episodes in the Gospel framed by the revelations of the Son at baptism and the crucifixion. At baptism, God the Father revealed the “Son” to Jesus; at the crucifixion, Jesus openly revealed the full meaning of “Son of God” before God the Father and before man, granting him access to his presence; here in the middle of the Gospel's narrative structure, the Father revealed the “Son” once again, with the intent of initiating Peter, James, and John into this sacred knowledge of Jesus's identity.

Similar to the baptism story, during the transfiguration, Peter, James, and John witnessed a divine encounter with a glorified manifestation of Jesus, Elijah, Moses, and the implied voice of God the Father. The voice of God once again revealed the sacred name of Jesus in sacred space (a high mountain) and in the presence of heavenly witnesses (Elijah and Moses): “This is my beloved Son: hear him” (Mark 9:7). Instead of revealing the name to Jesus, God endowed this name upon the three disciples.

This account is closely connected to the revelation of YHWH on Mount Sinai to Moses in Exodus 24:15–17:

And Moses went up into the mount, and *a cloud* covered the mount. And the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it *six days*: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the sight of the *glory of the Lord was like devouring fire* on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel. (emphasis added)

Both accounts describe going up to a mountain, experiencing a theophany, beholding a cloud of the divine presence, including a time period of six days, and manifesting shining physical appearances. Such close association with the Sinai episode links

the transfiguration with the temple and with a heavenly ascent.⁶¹ In Mount Sinai, YHWH commanded Moses to build the Israelite tabernacle in great detail to institute the formal cultic worship of YHWH. Such an association with the temple may imply that in the book of Mark, Peter, James, and John experienced a theophany at the glorification of Jesus that was imbued with temple-like revelation.

In this highly sacred setting, God endowed the disciples with special knowledge of Jesus's divinity through his shining transformation. Like Moses, who descended from Sinai with a veiled and shining face, the raiment of Jesus became white and shining to represent his status as God's true messenger, prophet, and son. God ratified Jesus's divinity with angelic witnesses (Elias and Moses) and with God's own cloud of presence.

Upon the culmination of all these divine manifestations, God initiated Peter, James, and John into a divine council and endowed them with sacred knowledge of Christ's hidden name: "This is my beloved Son" (Mark 9:7). After such great endowments of knowledge and vision, God required something of the disciples in return. God's next words, "Hear him," served as a commandment to give strict heed to the words of God's true messenger, Jesus the Son of God, who embodies the way to salvation and eternal life.

Despite this exceptional experience, the disciples continued to misread the event's significance, for they responded with great fear (Mark 9:6). Nevertheless, God entrusted the disciples with the sacred name and Jesus gave strict commandment that they should not reveal it to anyone until after the resurrection (Mark 9:9). This episode elucidates how the secrecy of the "Son" is not forbidden, but rather withheld from the uninitiated to prevent the abuse that devils and unclean spirits attempt. However, even though Jesus deemed Peter, James, and John worthy to receive the endowment of the "Son," the disciples had difficulty receiving it. Through the disciples' confusion, Mark illustrates the need for true disciples to understand and embrace a knowledge of Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

Apart from the two episodes studied here, the Gospel of Mark contains many examples of the disciples misunderstanding and mistaking Jesus's role and purpose.⁶² At Jesus's discourse on

parables, at the Transfiguration, and at the Resurrection, Jesus sought to initiate his disciples with a knowledge of his sacred identity, but they failed to understand. This elite group's ignorance of Jesus's identity highlights the irony that outsiders and enemies more readily recognized Jesus's sonship and saving power than the disciples. It underscores some of the potential pitfalls of discipleship and stresses the importance of having ears attuned to hear the gospel message. Those who can correctly recognize Jesus and reverence his identity as the Son can ultimately gain entrance to the glory of both the Son and the Father, as will be addressed below.

Revelation of the Son at the Cross

At the climax of the passion narrative in Mark 15, the true identity of Jesus Christ is proclaimed by the centurion who witnessed Jesus Christ on the cross: "Truly this man was the Son of God" (Mark 15:39). This pivotal point of the narrative is draped in tragedy and darkness, yet ironically, it is about opening access to God's presence through Jesus's identity. This moment signals both the telos of Jesus's journey, and the archetype for the disciple's journey.

Jesus Christ, now having completed his mission, was able to enter into the presence of his Father in Heaven. Jesus's entrance into the holy presence is symbolized by the tearing of the temple veil in Mark 15:38.⁶³ Since the Holy of Holies of the temple was believed to enshrine God's presence, only the high priest, prepared by purification and holiness, was permitted to enter this holy space and utter the divine name of YHWH. Jesus, cleansed by baptism, anointed with the Holy Spirit, and clothed with the ironic vestments of the "king of the Jews," now presented himself before the Father as both the sacrifice and the priest.

The opening of the temple veil is closely linked to the centurion's subsequent proclamation, "Truly this man was the Son of God" (Mark 15:39). In this moment, the sacred identity of "Son" acts as a keyword to grant passage through the parted veil and entrance into God's presence. As the centurion proclaims the sacred name, key to the salvation of all, Jesus gives himself back to the Father, having shown that he is the "Son of God" in the fullest sense. Jesus does not say or give the word "Son" to the Father; rather

he gives the person of the “Son” itself back to the Father. The person of the Son functions as a “word” in a way. It is ironic that a Gentile proclaimed the sacred title when Jesus’s own disciples consistently failed to recognize his true identity. However, the non-Israelite recognition and proclamation underscores the universal accessibility of the gospel message upon Jesus’s crucifixion.⁶⁴ The Gentile’s proclamation fluidly transitions into the second function of the crucifixion scene: the archetype for the disciple’s journey.

Conclusion

Throughout the Gospel, Mark demonstrates time and again how Jesus’s most ardent followers continuously misunderstood his identity and message. The author gives many examples of pitfalls even committed disciples can make. Readers of Mark’s Gospel are, therefore, not to look to the disciples for a model of behavior, but rather to Jesus Christ himself. Jesus’s character shows converts and disciples how to ultimately return to the presence of God through covenantal fidelity. Just like Jesus, disciples need to receive their own “prophetic” call through baptism, the anointing of the Holy Ghost, and the endowment of sacred knowledge. Disciples are to hold this knowledge of signs and keywords sacred and concealed from the profane. At the end of his or her personal journey of faith, the disciple may then enter into the ritual or literal presence of God through the Son.

Furthermore, in addition to entering into God’s presence, a disciple who adheres to a life of covenantal loyalty inherits God the Son’s identity. Those who take upon them the Son’s name at baptism, also inherit the Son’s lineage and glory upon completion of their journey. As the author of Romans explained,

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God . . . the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “*Abba*, Father” . . . Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. (Romans 8:14–17 NRSV)

Thus, the messianic secret becomes less enigmatic and more sacred when viewed in light of the Son. According to the Gospel of

Mark, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ opened the way for all disciples to receive the name of the Son as a symbol of their covenant baptism, hold the covenant sacred throughout their life, and ultimately use it as a keyword to gain access to the presence, identity, and inheritance of the Son.

Notes

1. “The Way” is used as a technical term in the Gospel of Mark to denote the path of Christian discipleship and belonging to the Christian community. See Julie M. Smith, “The Way—*Hodos* (ὁδός),” (Brigham Young University New Testament Commentary Conference, 2019); Julie M. Smith, *The Gospel According to Mark*, (Provo: Brigham Young University Studies, 2018), 467.
2. Christopher Tuckett, “Messianic Secret,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 797–800.
3. W. Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*. Trans. J. C. G. Greig. London. 1971. Wrede argued that the author of the Gospel of Mark imposed this motif on his narrative to show Jesus’s realization of his role as Messiah at resurrection. To explain why people did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah before resurrection, the author of the Gospel of Mark had Jesus command secrecy of his followers.
4. V. Taylor, “The Messianic Secret in Mark,” in *Expository Times*, vol. 59, (1948), 146–151; D. E. Aune, “The Problem of the Messianic Secret,” in *Novum Testamentum*, vol. 11, (1969), 1–31; J. D. G. Dunn, “The Messianic Secret in Mark,” in *Tyndale Bulletin*, vol. 21, (1970), 92–117; C. F. D. Moule, “On Defining the Messianic Secret in Mark,” in *Jesus and Paulus. Festschrift für W. G. Kümmel zur 70. Geburtstag*, ed. E. E. Ellis and E. Grässer (Göttingen, Germany, 1975).
5. Tuckett, “Messianic Secret,” 798.
6. M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, Translated by B. L. Woolf. (New York: 1934); T. A. Burkill, *Mysterious Revelation* (Ithaca, NT: 1963); Francis Watson, “The Social Function of Mark’s Secrecy Theme.” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 24 (1985): 49–69.
7. H. J. Ebeling, *Das Messiasgeheimnis und die Botschaft des Marcusevangelisten*, BZNW 19 (Berlin, Germany: 1939).
8. J. D. Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark’s Gospel* (Philadelphia, PA: 1983); H. Conzelmann, “Present and Future in the Synoptic Tradition,” in *JTC*, vol. 5 (1968), 26–44; G. Strecker, “The Theory of the Messianic Secret in Mark’s Gospel,” in *The Messianic Secret*, ed. C. M. Tuckett (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 49–64; E. Schweizer, “The Question of the Messianic Secret in Mark,” in *The Messianic Secret*, 65–74; Ulrich Luz, “The Secrecy Motif and the Marcan Christology,” in *The Messianic*

- Secret*, 75–96; T. J. Weeden, “The Social Function of Mark’s Secrecy Theme,” in *JSNT*, vol. 24 (1971) 49–69.
9. Adam Winn, *The Purpose of Mark’s Gospel: An Early Christian Response to Roman Imperial Propaganda*, WUNT II/245 (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); David F. Watson, *Honor Among Christians: The Cultural Key to the Messianic Secret* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010).
 10. Hendrika Nicoline Roskam, *The Purpose of the Gospel of Mark in its Historical and Social Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 174–176.
 11. Roskam, *The Purpose of the Gospel of Mark*, 176–191; W. R. Telford, *The Theology of the Gospel of Mark*, New Testament Theology Series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 38–54; Heikki Räisänen, “The ‘Messianic Secret’ in Mark’s Gospel,” in *The Messianic Secret*, ed. C. M. Tuckett (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 132.
 12. “Son” as a title for Jesus is used 27 times in the Gospel of Mark in its different variants, including “son of God” (1:1; 3:11; 5:7; 15:39), “son of man” (2:10, 28; 8:31, 38; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45; 13:26, 34; 14:21, 21, 41; 14:62), “son of David” (10:47, 48; 12:35), “beloved son” (1:11; 9:7), “son of Mary” (6:3), and “the son” (13:32). Other titles for Jesus in the Gospel of Mark that occur with less frequency include “lord,” “master,” “Christ,” “king of the Jews,” “Jesus of Nazareth,” “holy one of god,” and “king of Israel.” A significant title relating to the Son is “Son of Man,” accounting for 15 instances in the Gospel of Mark. Son of Man is a technical term alluding to Daniel 7:13 and the eschatological figure sent from heaven to bring forth God’s work. Jesus frequently appropriates this title in self-referential passages. As its usage serves a distinct function in the text outside the scope of this study, I will primarily be analyzing other occurrences of “Son,” such as in the titles “Son of God,” “beloved Son,” “son of Mary,” “Son of the Blessed,” and “Son of the most high God.”
 13. Edwin K. Broadbent, *Naming Jesus: Titular Christology in the Gospel of Mark*, JSNT Supplement Series 175 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 116. For a comprehensive study of divine kingship in the ancient Near East, see Nicole Brisch, *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond*, Oriental Institute Seminars (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago, 2008).
 14. Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary (Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible)*, ed. Harold W. Attridge, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 150. In the Hebrew Bible, Israel was sometimes characterized as God’s son; in Genesis 6, the sons of god are sometimes identified as angelic beings from God’s presence. See Exodus 4:22; Jeremiah 31:9; 31:20; Hosea 11:1. See also Broadbent, *Naming Jesus*, 118.
 15. cf. Isaiah 42:1; Bas M. Van Iersel, *Mark: A Reader-Response Commentary*, JSNT Supplement Series 164, ed. Stanley E. Porter, (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 101.

16. Broadbent, *Naming Jesus*, 123.
17. Notable examples of the title “Son of God” being used in Book of Mormon prophecy include 2 Nephi 25:16, 19; Mosiah 3:8; 4:2; Alma 5:48; 6:8; 36:17–18; Helaman 14:2, 8, 12; 3 Nephi 5:26.
18. See Book of Mormon Central, “Why Did Benjamin Give Multiple Names for Jesus at the Coronation of his Son Mosiah? (Mosiah 3:8),” in *KnoWhy*, vol. 536 (October 17, 2019).
19. See 3 Nephi 9:15–17; 11:7–10; 20:31; Ether 3:14; Jesus frequently uses “Son of God” as an introductory title in the Doctrine and Covenants as well. See D&C 6:21; 10:57; 14:9; 35:2; 36:8.
20. See Alma 12:33–34; Alma 13:1–16; Helaman 8:18; D&C 107:1–4; Moses 5:6–15; Moses 6:66–67. See also John W. Welch, “Alma 13–16,” in *John W. Welch Notes* (Springville, UT: Book of Mormon Central, 2020), 600–602, available online at <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/alma-13-16>
21. See also Mosiah 27:25; Ether 3:14; D&C 25:1; 34:3; 35:2; 45:8; 76:24, 58; Moses 6:68;
22. The first occurrence of “Son” in the Gospel is Mark 1:1, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” This verse is in dispute, as it is missing from the best and earliest manuscripts. However, while the verse may not represent the earliest reading, it is possible that it may preserve an early interpretation of the Gospel of Mark. An early scribe or reader of the text clearly viewed sonship as a critical part of summarizing or providing an accurate heading for this text. The Joseph Smith Translation includes “Son of God,” see “New Testament Revision 2,” p [8], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed 28 December 2020.
23. Mark 1:1 frames the entire Gospel with “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” The earliest manuscripts omit “the Son of God.” Collins, *Mark*, 130.
24. Examples of visions of the Divine Council in the Hebrew Bible and the Book of Mormon can be found in 1 Kings 22:19–23; Isaiah 6:1–13; Job 2:1–7; 1 Nephi 1:5–15; 1 Nephi 11–14; Alma 36:24–26. Julie Smith acknowledges an allusion to prophetic call narratives in the baptism of Jesus. See Smith, *Mark*, 89. For discussion on the divine council as the heavenly assembly under YHWH, see Michael S. Heiser, “Divine Council,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, eds. John D. Barry and Lazarus Wentz, (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2012), 23; S. B. Parker, “Council,” in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons of the Bible*, eds. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999), 391; Paul B. Summer, “Visions of the Divine Council in the Hebrew Bible,” Master’s Thesis, (Pepperdine University, 2013); Michael S. Heiser, “The Divine Council in Late Canonical and Non-Canonical Second Temple Jewish Literature,” PhD. Dissertation, (University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2004).

25. For examination of the divine council in the Book of Mormon and its use in prophetic call narratives, see Stephen O. Smoot, "The Divine Council in the Hebrew Bible and the Book of Mormon," in *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, vol. 27 (2017), 155–180; David E. Bokovoy, "'Thou Knowest That I Believe': Invoking The Spirit of the Lord as Council Witness in 1 Nephi 11," in *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, vol. 1 (2012), 1–23; Stephen D. Ricks, "Heavenly Visions and Prophetic Calls in Isaiah 6 (2 Nephi 16), the Book of Mormon, and the Revelation of John," in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, eds. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch, (Provo: FARMS, 1998), 171–90; John W. Welch, "The Calling of Lehi as a Prophet in the World of Jerusalem," in *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*, eds. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely, (Provo: FARMS, 2004), 421–448; John W. Welch, "Lehi's Council Vision and the Mysteries of God," in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon: A Decade of New Research*, ed. John W. Welch, (Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book/FARMS, 1992), 24–25; Blake T. Ostler, "The Throne-Theophany and Prophetic Commission in 1 Nephi: A Form Critical Analysis," in *BYU Studies Quarterly*, vol. 26, no. 4 (1986), 67–95.
26. See Smith, *Mark*, 94.
27. It should be noted that while the baptism was witnessed by the crowd who had gathered to John, the theophany that follows may have been a private encounter. The text indicates only that "he" saw the heavens open, saw the Holy Ghost, and heard the voice from heaven. It is ambiguous whether the "he" in Mark 1:10 refers to Jesus or John the Baptist, but in either case, it does not appear that this sacred exchange between heaven and earth was necessarily open to public view but rather could have been a visionary experience. Smith, *Mark*, 87; Van Iersel, *Mark: A Reader-Response Commentary*, 99; C.S. Mann, *Mark: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, in *The Anchor Bible*, eds. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1986), 200.
28. The bestowal of a new name upon entering into this new covenant may be compared to the similar covenant renaming of Abraham (Genesis 17:5), Sarah (Genesis 17:16), Joseph of Egypt (Genesis 41:45), and Jacob (Genesis 32:28; 35:10). See Bruce H. Porter and Stephen D. Ricks, "Names in Antiquity: Old, New, and Hidden," in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley* (Salt Lake City, FARMS, 1990), 5.
29. Collins, *Mark*, 149.
30. John A. Tvedtnes, "Olive Oil: Symbol of the Holy Ghost," in *The Allegory of the Olive Tree: The Olive, the Bible, and Jacob 5*, eds. Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch, (Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book/Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1994), 447.

31. Commentary on the baptism of Jesus from Christian writers tended to emphasize the qualities of the Holy Spirit that could be extrapolated from its appearance as a dove; e.g., its peacefulness, swiftness, and harmlessness. See Augustine, “Lectures or Tractates on the Gospel According to St. John,” in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 1, vol. 14, ed. Philip Schaff, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 7:39–48; John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, volume 1 (Grand Rapids: Christian Classic Ethereal Library, 1999).
32. Robert L. Marrott, “Dove, Sign of,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, vol. 4, (New York City: Macmillan Publishers, 1992), 1:428.
33. See “Discourse, circa 19 July 1840, as Reported by Unknown Scribe–A,” (Church History Library, 1939); “Discourse, circa 21 March 1841, as Reported by Martha Jane Knowlton Coray,” (Church History Library), 620; “Journal, December 1842–June 1844; Book 1, 21 December 1842–10 March 1843,” (Church History Library), 155.
34. cf “Instruction, 9 February 1843 [D&C 129], as Reported by Willard Richards,” (Church History Library), 11771; “Instruction, 9 February 1843 [D&C 129], as Reported by William Clayton,” (Church History Library), 988.
35. “Book of Abraham and Facsimiles, 1 March–16 May 1842,” (Church History Library) 7813.
36. “God Sitting Upon His Throne (Facsimile 2, Figure 7),” in *Book of Abraham Insight*, vol. 33; Michael D. Rhodes, “The Joseph Smith Hypocephalus . . . 20 Years Later,” *FARMS Preliminary Paper* (1997), 11.
37. “Discourse, 29 January 1843, as Reported by Franklin D. Richards,” (Church History Library), 981; “Discourse, 29 January 1843, as Reported by Willard Richards–A,” (Church History Library), 980; “Discourse, 29 January 1843, as Reported by Willard Richards–B,” (Church History Library), 11770.
38. Jesus occasionally prohibits disciples and witnesses from proclaiming the miracle when Jesus performs healings in the Gospel of Mark. However, because none of the healing narratives employ use of the name “Son,” they are outside the scope of this study.
39. New Testament quotations are from the King James Version, unless otherwise indicated.
40. Nicholas Benjamin Pumphrey, “Names and Power: The Concept of Secret Names in the Ancient Near East,” Masters Thesis, (Vanderbilt University, 2009); Porter, “Names in Antiquity,” 501–522; Truman G. Madsen, “‘Putting on the Names’: A Jewish-Christian Legacy,” in *By Study and Also By Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley* (Salt Lake City: FARMS, 1990), 458–481; William J. Hamblin, “I Have Revealed

- Your Name': The Hidden Temple in John 17," in *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Scripture*, vol. 1 (2012), 61–89.
41. Robert Kriech Ritner, "The Legend of Isis and the Name of Re," in *The Context of Scripture*, ed. William W. Hallo (New York: Brill, 1993), 1:33.
 42. For other examples of using hidden names to exert power, see Porter, "Names in Antiquity," 508–514.
 43. Collins, *Mark*, 169.
 44. The episode in Mark 9:20–29 is categorized as an exorcism here but can arguably also be categorized as a healing narrative, as elements of both exorcism and healing type scenes can be found.
 45. Pieter G. R. De Villiers, "Mystical Holiness in Mark's Gospel," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies*, vol. 72, no. 4 (2016), 4.
 46. Collins, *Mark*, 162. This pericope possibly forms a chiasm, centering on Jesus's identity as the Holy One of God, and Jesus of Nazareth. See Appendix 1.
 47. Collins, *Mark*, 165; see also Rudolf Bultmann *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1963), 209–210. For example, in *Antiquities of the Jews*, Josephus describes a man performing an exorcism by pronouncing Solomon's name and uttering incantations purportedly attributed to Solomon. See Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 8.2.5.
 48. See Collins, *Mark*, 169.
 49. See Psalm 71:22; 78:41; 89:18–19; Isaiah 1:4; 5:19, 24; 10:20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19; 30:11–15; 31:1; 37:23; 41:14–20; 43:3, 14–15; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9, 14.
 50. Otto Procksch, "ἅγιος, ἀγιάζω, ἁγιασμός, ἁγιότης, ἁγιωσύνη," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Herhard Kittel, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), 1:101–102.
 51. Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 88. See also C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Mark*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 77.
 52. This variation of the title "Son" is particularly appropriate for this Gentile setting. "Most high" distinguishes a certain god apart from a large pantheon of gods in pagan theology. For example, the "most high" god is an attested epithet in Hellenistic settings for Zeus. See Smith, *Mark*, 321; Collins, *Mark*, 268.
 53. Roskam observes that another plausible reason for the lack of a command to silence is that Jesus was apparently alone with the disciples. While the crowds were not to know Jesus's identity, he intends for his disciples to understand who he is. See Roskam, *The Purpose of the Gospel of Mark*, 179.
 54. Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones, and Roderick McKenzie, "ὄρκιζω," in *A Greek-English Lexicon*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940).

55. Collins, *Mark*, 166, 268. For a first-century example of this formula, see *Testament of Solomon* vol. 9, 15, 17, 21, 22, 24, 28, 33, 46, 48, 51, 52, 58, 60, 64, 70, 72, 73, 121, 125.
56. Joseph B. Tyson, "The Blindness of the Disciples in Mark," in *The Messianic Secret*, ed. C. M. Tuckett (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 35.
57. Adela Yarbro Collins argues that the "mystery of the kingdom" refers to knowing the necessity of the death and resurrection of Christ. See Adela Yarbro Collins, "Mysteries in the Gospel of Mark," in *Studia Theologica–Nordic Journal of Theology*, vol. 49, no. 1 (1995), 21–23.
58. Roskam, *The Purpose of the Gospel of Mark*, 176, note 27, 205. It is also worth noting that in Matthew's account of this scene, Peter includes the divine title in his Christological confession: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). This may represent a separate textual tradition, but it may also stand as a witness to the general sentiment of this confession, namely, that Peter sees Jesus Christ as a divine messiah sent from God.
59. Roskam, *The Purpose of the Gospel of Mark*, 177.
60. Smith, *Mark*, 496–502.
61. Jesus's temporary transformation may anticipate and foreshadow his final glorification, as is typical in apocalypses featuring heavenly ascent narratives. See Martha Himmelfarb, "Transformation and the Righteous Dead," in *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) 47–71.
62. Mark 1:27; 6:47–56; 8:14–2, 31–33; 9:31–32; 14:32–41; 14:66–72; 16:1–8, 9–20.
63. It is ambiguous in Mark whether the veil in question is the veil to the Holy of Holies or the veil to the outer court. In either case, the literary effect still holds, as the veil bars access to the temple from the profane. cf. Hebrews 9:9–11, 23–28. See Collins, *Mark*, 759. Various interpretations of the tearing of the temple veil abound. One common interpretation argues that the torn veil represents a condemnation of the temple and, by extension, the Jewish nation; see William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 574–475; Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly, *The Gospel and the Sacred: Poetics of Violence in Mark* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 56–57; Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark*, in *Black's New Testament Commentary* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 377–378.
64. It is uncertain whether the centurion's statement is expressed sincerely or sarcastically, but for Mark's purposes, the proclamation of the Son of God can be read as sincere.