

Excerpt take from Steven E. Runge, *A Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2010), 192-96.

Mark 4 contains a series of teachings that are not interrupted by speeches from others except in vv 10–11. However, it is segmented into smaller units using redundant quotative frames that reintroduce Jesus as the speaker. Though they are semantically redundant, they perform an important pragmatic function.<sup>253</sup> We find the first redundant frame of the chapter in v. 9, just as Jesus finishes telling a parable. It separates the concluding warning from the parable itself.

**Example 93 ::** Mark 4:9, 13, 21, 24, 26, 30

<sup>9</sup> <μ>καὶ ἔλεγεν· μ> ὃς ἔχει ὦτα ἀκούειν ἀκουέτω.

<sup>9</sup> <μ>And he said, μ> “Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear!”

<sup>13</sup> <μ>Καὶ <ΘλέγειΘ> αὐτοῖς· μ> οὐκ οἴδατε τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην, καὶ p 193 πῶς πάσας τὰς παραβολὰς γνώσεσθε;

<sup>13</sup> <μ>And he said, μ> to them, “Do you not understand this parable? And how will you understand all the parables?”

<sup>21</sup> <μ>Καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς· μ> μῆτι ἔρχεται ὁ λύχνος ἵνα ὑπὸ τὸν μόδιον τεθῆ ἢ ὑπὸ τὴν κλίνην; οὐχ ἵνα ἐπὶ τὴν λυχνίαν τεθῆ;

<sup>21</sup> <μ>And he said to them, μ> “Surely a lamp is not brought so that it may be put under a bushel basket or under a bed, is it? Is it not so that it may be put on a lampstand?”

<sup>24</sup> <μ>Καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς· μ> βλέπετε τί ἀκούετε. ἐν ᾧ μέτρῳ μετρεῖτε μετρηθήσεται ὑμῖν καὶ προστεθήσεται ὑμῖν.

<sup>24</sup> <μ>And he said to them, μ> “Take care what you hear! With the measure by which you measure out, it will be measured out to you, and will be added to you.

<sup>26</sup> <μ>Καὶ ἔλεγεν· μ> οὕτως ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ὡς ἄνθρωπος βάλῃ τὸν σπόρον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς

<sup>26</sup> <μ>And he said, μ> “The kingdom of God is like this: like a man scatters seed on the ground.

<sup>30</sup> <μ>Καὶ ἔλεγεν· μ> πῶς ὁμοιώσωμεν τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ ἢ ἐν τίνι αὐτὴν παραβολῇ θῶμεν;

<sup>30</sup> <μ>And he said, μ> “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or by what parable can we present it?”

---

<sup>253</sup> Some might argue that these quotative frames are evidence of redaction, or of an underlying oral form of the sayings. Regardless of the origins of the current text, the writer/editor could have removed the quotative frames instead of leaving them in, if this is even what happened. Removing them would have *unified* the sayings into a single speech instead of a *series* of speeches. Their presence, regardless of origins, has the effect of segmenting what could have been a long speech into smaller chunks.

Note that the verb form used is imperfect, not aorist. Wallace refers to this usage as the “instantaneous imperfect” where the imperfect is used “just like the aorist indicative, to indicate simple past.”<sup>254</sup> He notes that the usage “is virtually restricted to ἔλεγε in narrative literature.”<sup>255</sup> In contrast, Levinsohn notes that the imperfect is used “to portray events as incomplete.”<sup>256</sup> Note that the primary reason for placing the frame here is to segment an ongoing speech, not to indicate that the speech is completed.

Imperfect forms of λέγω are characteristically used either to introduce an initial speech that is more of a monologue than a p 194 dialogue,<sup>257</sup> or to record the responses of multiple groups to one thing.<sup>258</sup> It can also be used in the expected imperfective sense of ongoing or repeated events.<sup>259</sup>

Note that when one comes across an aorist verb of speaking without a full noun phrase (eg, εἶπεν or ὁ εἶπεν), the default expectation is that there has been a change of speaker and hearer. Since underspecified aorist quotative frames are most often associated with changes in speakers, using an aorist mid-speech frame might cause confusion, creating the impression that there was a switch of speakers.<sup>260</sup> Use of a present tense quotative frame would have created an historical present.<sup>261</sup>

If a writer is going to insert an underspecified redundant frame with the goal of continuing the speech, the imperfect is the most natural choice. Although it segments the speech, it does not signal closure or switch. The aspect of the imperfect itself is used for ongoing or incomplete action. This discourse-based explanation of the instantaneous imperfect provides a reasonable account of the data without needing to postulate another sense. The fact that Wallace’s data is “virtually restricted to ἔλεγε in narrative literature” makes this explanation even more compelling.<sup>262</sup>

---

<sup>254</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 542.

<sup>255</sup> *ibid*

<sup>256</sup> Levinsohn, *Discourse Features*, 175.

<sup>257</sup> Robertson refers to this usage as an “inchoative imperfect,” eg, Matthew 9:11, 21, 23, 34; 26:5; Mark 2:16; 24; 3:23; 5:30 (*Grammar*, 885).

<sup>258</sup> Eg, Matthew 12:23; 21:11; 27:41, 47, 49; Mark 3:21, 22; 4:41.

<sup>259</sup> Such clauses often begin with γάρ, and provide background to the situation describing ongoing actions, eg, Matt 14:4; Mark 3:30; 4:2; 5:8, 28.

<sup>260</sup> See Levinsohn’s discussion of the encoding of participants in narrative contexts (*Discourse Features*, 135–147).

<sup>261</sup> There are only a handful of instances where an HP verb of speaking is used mid-speech: Mark 4:13 and John 1:51; 21:16, 17. In each case, significant pronouncements follow.

<sup>262</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 542.

The imperfect quotative frame ἔλεγεν is used redundantly four more times in Mark 4. The frame in v. 21 separates the explanation of p 195 the parable of the sower from the parable of the light under a bushel. The frame in v. 26 segments the light under the bushel from the parable of the growing seed. The frame in v. 30 segments the text again just before the parable of the mustard seed.

There is a comparable chaining together of parables in Matthew 13. Rather than using an imperfect verb of speaking to segment the text, Matthew inserts a redundant narrative comment to accomplish the very same effect.

**Example 94 :: Matthew 13:24, 33**

<sup>24</sup> <μ>”Ἄλλην παραβολὴν παρέθηκεν αὐτοῖς λέγων· μ>” ὁμοιώθη ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ἀνθρώπῳ σπείραντι καλὸν σπέρμα ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ αὐτοῦ.

<sup>24</sup> <μ>”He put before them another parable, saying, μ>” “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.

<sup>33</sup> <μ>”Ἄλλην παραβολὴν ἐλάλησεν αὐτοῖς· μ>” ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ζύμη, ἣν λαβοῦσα γυνὴ ἐνέκρυσεν εἰς ἀλεύρου σάτα p 196 τρία ἕως οὗ ἐζυμώθη ὅλον.

<sup>33</sup> <μ>”He told them another parable: μ>” “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and put into three measures of wheat flour until the whole batch was leavened.”

Matthew’s strategy accomplishes the same purpose of segmenting the text by redundantly introducing what follows as another parable, even though he uses different words. The technique is repeated again in vv 31 and 33.

<sup>31</sup> <μ>”Ἄλλην παραβολὴν παρέθηκεν αὐτοῖς λέγων· μ>” ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν κόκκῳ σινάπεως, ὃν λαβὼν ἄνθρωπος ἔσπειρεν ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ αὐτοῦ.

<sup>31</sup> <μ>”He put before them another parable, saying, μ>” “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field.

<sup>33</sup> <μ>”Ἄλλην παραβολὴν ἐλάλησεν αὐτοῖς· μ>” ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ζύμη, ἣν λαβοῦσα γυνὴ ἐνέκρυσεν εἰς ἀλεύρου σάτα τρία ἕως οὗ ἐζυμώθη ὅλον.

<sup>33</sup> <μ>”He told them another parable: μ>” “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and put into three measures of wheat flour until the whole batch was leavened.”

It is very important for readers to know how and where to break a text down into smaller chunks for easier processing. Use of redundant quotative frames in the middle of a speech is a common way for the writer to provide the reader with instructions about where to segment the text.<sup>263</sup>

<sup>263</sup> See §6.2 and the discussion of the “Cross-Linguistic Processing Hierarchy.” Based on this theoretical framework, the redundant quotative frames are understood first to be accomplishing a processing function, guiding the reader’s judgments about where to segment the text into smaller pieces for easier processing.

