



εὐθύς

From: "Temporal Deixis of the Greek Verb in the Gospel of Mark with Reference to Verbal Aspect"

Th.D. diss., Central Baptist Seminary, Minneapolis, 1998

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(See [note](#) at the end re. fonts used and link for .pdf format version.)

[This basic article has now been published in a much expanded form as "The Use of εὐθύς ('immediately') in Mark," *JMAT* 1.1 (spring 1997): 90-121.]

Due to the frequent and distinctive use of εὐθύς [*EUTHUS*] in Mark, <1> greater space is devoted to this deictic marker. <2> The semantic field of εὐθύς may refer to sequential action (with either the connotation of a short intervening duration of time between two events or of no intervening event/s) or it may suggest the rapidity with which an event occurs. <3> It may, in addition to these meanings, function as a conjunction with a meaning not greatly different from καί. In this case it may add a nuance of sequence (though not necessarily temporal sequence, but in the sense of, "the next thing I want to say is..."), <4> or it may be "otiose, and a mere mannerism." <5> Both adverbial and conjunctive uses are considered together in this section.

The following categories may be observed in Mark's use of εὐθύς and the syntactical combination καὶ εὐθύς. The word εὐθύς may be used as an adverb. In each of these instances εὐθύς modifies a verb and expresses a short duration of time. This may be either a description of the short interval prior to the beginning of an action or it may describe the rapidity with which an action is performed. English translations that may be appropriate (depending on the context) include "quickly," "promptly," "as soon as," "at once," and perhaps "immediately" (this last gloss is usually too strong a term for this category). Mark 4:29 illustrates this use well. In this parable of the growing seed, once the grain is ripe, the farmer "at once" begins the harvest (εὐθύς ἀποστέλλει τὸ ὄρεπνον, "at once he sends the sickle"). The point is not that he "swings a fast sickle," but that the harvest begins without delay once the grain is ripe (for reasons that any farmer understands). The *NIV* expresses this well by combining εὐθύς with the initial ὅταν: "as soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it." <6>

One of Mark's unique stylistic features is his frequent use of καὶ εὐθύς rather than εὐθύς

alone.<7> This combination may have the same meaning as εὐθύς alone,<8> but there are also several additional uses attested only with the addition of καί.<9> A number of passages evidence a specialized use of καὶ εὐθύς that is a more narrow application of the concept of rapidity.<10> In these cases the action referred to takes place instantaneously. When this connotation is present, Mark always uses καὶ εὐθύς with an aorist verb (either an indicative or a participle), never εὐθύς alone and never with a present verb form. The perfective aspect of the aorist is particularly appropriate for describing instantaneous action. Evidence from the context is necessary to establish this use; it cannot be assumed from isolated grammatical features. Mark 1:42 describes the instantaneous healing of a leper: καὶ εὐθύς ἀπῆλθεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἡ λέπρα ("immediately the leprosy left him"). Contextual indications that this was an instantaneous healing come from Jesus' touch in v. 41, the evidence of accomplished healing in vv. 43-4, and the general pattern of Jesus' healing miracles elsewhere (often with explicit statement that it was instantaneous, e.g., Matt. 15:28; 17:18).

As a conjunction, καὶ εὐθύς carries no sense of rapidity or shortness of time.<11> It indicates simply the succession of events, and at times has no more force than καί alone. Failing to recognize this use of εὐθύς frequently leads to over-exegeting and emphasizing what Mark did not intend to emphasize.<12> The description of Jesus' Capernaum synagogue ministry described in Mark 1 illustrates καὶ εὐθύς twice in a conjunctive sense. In neither instance is there an emphasis on rapidity; the text simply narrates sequential events. In v. 21 the sequence is: go to Capernaum, Sabbath arrives, go to synagogue, Jesus teaches. "εὐθύς probably implies what was done on the immediately following Sabbath."<13> The text is best translated, "They went to Capernaum, and then on the Sabbath, entering the synagogue, Jesus began to teach."<14> To force καὶ εὐθύς into a temporal role at this point would require either an emphasis on Jesus going to the synagogue as soon as the Sabbath arrived (if εὐθύς modifies εἰσελθῶν) or on the "quickness with which he didactically takes charge"<15> (if εὐθύς modifies ἐδίδασκεν). There is no justification for either of these ideas in the context, however, and is rather pedantic. The second use in this passage is v. 23, καὶ εὐθύς ἦν ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ αὐτῶν ἄνθρωπον ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ καὶ ἀνέκραξεν λέγων ("and then a man in their synagogue who had an unclean spirit cried out").<16> To interject an *immediately* (or even a *just then*) in the middle of the narrative makes little sense, especially since it follows a description of the people's reaction to Jesus, not an account of something Jesus did or said. "Jesus was already teaching, and the appearance of the demoniac could not have been 'immediate': he is not said to have entered the synagogue immediately, but to have been present."<17> It seems to be strictly transitional at this point, introducing the next item that Mark intends to describe.

The conjunctive use of εὐθύς has been noted by several grammarians. Howard's discussion of Semitisms in the NT suggests that εὐθύς is sometimes an inferential conjunction in Mark; he cites 1:21, 23, 29, and 30 as examples of this.<18> Turner suggests that εὐθύς is used adverbially only five times, "elsewhere it is probably merely a connective conjunction, occurring at the beginning of its clause." He adds, however, "that sometimes, as at 6:25, εὐθύς has rather stronger adverbial force: *she went in immediately*."<19> He elsewhere makes this later statement a "rigid rule" in Mark: "at the beginning of the clause [πάλιν and εὐθύς] are mere conjunctions, but adverbial elsewhere."<20> Riley contends that "when the word εὐθύς corresponds to an equivalent word in Matthew and/or Luke, it requires the sense of 'immediately.' When there is no corresponding word, the more natural translation is in almost every instance 'then.' He also suggests that "Mark's usage is very much the mannerism of a colloquial style, without great significance."<21>

If εὐθύς occurs alone, it is always adverbial, never conjunctive. When the composite phrase καὶ εὐθύς occurs, it may be either adverbial or conjunctive. Only the context can determine the proper classification. There are no grammatical or syntactical patterns that work in every instance or even in a sufficient majority of instances to be exegetically useful.<22> When Mark desired to express instantaneous action rather than simply quickness or temporal sequence, he always uses καὶ εὐθύς.

Excursus: Burkitt and Weiß on εὐθύς

F. C. Burkitt argued that καὶ εὐθύς is not used in Mark in a temporal sense but rather as a connective equivalent to the Hebrew *waw* consecutive.

The essence of the meaning of 'waw consecutive' is that the event related is regarded as happening in due sequence to what has gone before. To express this καὶ is too inadequate a link, while *dev* implies a contrast which is wholly wanting in the Hebrew: the turn of thought is more or less our English 'and so.' But this is exactly what S. Mark means by this καὶ εὐθύς, and it is what is generally meant in the Fourth Gospel by οὖν. Simon's wife's mother was sick of a fever *and so* they tell Jesus of her (καὶ εὐθύς Mk i 30): S. Mark does not mean to emphasize the haste they were in to tell the news. Similarly in S. John there are literally scores of verses beginning with εἶπεν οὖν or εἶπον οὖν where 'he said therefore' brings out far too prominently the idea of causation. All that is meant is *rme)oywa* * *and so he said,* or '*and so they said,*' as the case may be.<23>

Weiß evaluates Burkitt's thesis in relation to an alternative explanation by Merx that εὐθύς is missing in the Sinaitic Syriac because it was not present in the exemplar from which it was translated.<24> The bulk of Weiß's article (126-32) is devoted to a discussion of the textual validity of εὐθύς in Mark. He concludes that out of 48 instances of εὐθύς in Mark (he includes all *v.l.* in his count), only 7 occurrences are genuine (1:18, 42; 2:12; 4:17; 5:42; 10:52; and 14:72), with 3 others probable (4:5; 6:50; 5:29). He concludes from this that Matthew and Luke were based on a proto-Mark *Grundschrift* (underlying written source) that did not include εὐθύς in the remaining 38 passages:

Die einzig mögliche Annahme ist, daß der Text der synoptischen Grundschrift, den sie lasen, jene Zuge noch nicht enthielt, sodaß sie nicht den ursprünglichen Markus-Text, sondern Ausschmückungen, Erweiterungen, Wucherungen darstellen. Dazu gehört nun auch das häufige εὐθύς.<25> [Sorry! no umlauts.]

Weiß concludes that εὐθύς should therefore be excised from the same places in the current text of Mark as well. One of the few places where he considers it probably to be a genuine reading is in the *Heilungsgeschichten* (healing accounts):

Was heißt hier echt und unecht? Mit einiger Sicherheit dürfen wir sagen, daß das εὐθύς in dem alten Markus, der dem Matthäus und Lukas vorlag, im weiten Umfange noch gefehlt hat; bemerkenswert ist, daß es in den Heilungsgeschichten ein Umlaut des Erzählungstypus gewesen ist.<26> [Sorry! no umlauts.]

If εὐθύς is so poorly attested, says Weiß, it cannot provide a basis for equating it with a Hebrew *waw* consecutive and thus a connective rather than an adverb.<27> In light of the previous discussion in this chapter,<28> it appears that Burkitt's conclusion more closely aligns with the characteristic use of εὐθύς in Mark than does the alternative explanation of Weiß and Merx.

NOTES

1. The following discussion summarizes a much longer study of εὐθύς in Mark's gospel: R. Decker, "The Use of εὐθύς ('immediately') in Mark," *JMAT** 1 (1997): 90-120. (**Journal of Ministry and Theology*). [[>text](#)]

2. Mark has an unusual concentration of occurrences of εὐθύς. In narrative material (Matthew-Acts), εὐθύς occurs 51 times. Of these, 41 instances are in Mark (1:10, 12, 18, 20, 21, 23, 28, 29, 30, 42, 43; 2:8, 12; 3:6; 4:5, 15, 16, 17, 29; 5:2, 29, 30, 42 (2 x); 6:25, 27, 45, 50, 54; 7:25; 8:10; 9:15, 20, 24; 10:52; 11:2, 3; 14:43, 45, 72; 15:1.) Matthew has 5, Luke and Acts have 1 each, and John has 3 instances of εὐθύς. The more common word in the narrative sections is εὐχρηστικῶς which occurs 13 x in Matthew, only once in Mark, 6 x in Luke, 3 x in John, and 9 x in Acts (32 x total). It is obvious that Mark had a distinct preference for εὐθύς over εὐχρηστικῶς. (G. Dalman suggests that the "excessive frequency" of εὐθύς in Mark "must depend on the particular predilection of the author, and is due probably to Greek rather than Jewish-Aramaic influence" [*The Words of Jesus Considered in the Light of Post-Biblical Jewish Writings and the Aramaic Language*, 29].

These factors suggest that εὐθύς is a characteristic Markan word that contributes to Mark's emphasis on the *actions* of Jesus and is part of the vocabulary that gives the Gospel its unique flavor. In this regard, see W. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, NICNT, 25-8. M. Hooker suggests that the frequent use of εὐθύς "gives a sense of urgency to the narrative," although she also recognizes that it can be used in the weakened sense of "so next" (*The Gospel According to Saint Mark*, BNTC, 45). Likewise Gundry writes that "the frequency of Mark's use of εὐθύς, 'immediately,' does not mean that the adverb has lost its vitality for him; rather he wants to portray a ministry full of powerful activity" (GM, 86). H. Riley, however, suggests that the "feeling of urgency" that pervades Mark is due to two factors: the omission of extensive didactic sections and the unusual predominance of εὐθύς. He suggests that if εὐθύς does not carry the force of "immediately" often assigned to it (and he does not think that it does), the effect of Mark would be little different than that of Matthew if the teaching sections were removed from the first Gospel ("Euthus in Mark," Appendix 1 of *The Making of Mark: An Exploration*, 215). That is, Mark may not intend to convey a sense of urgency in his writing. [[>text](#)]

3. Gundry would apparently not agree with this assessment. In his comments on 6:25 he says that "'with haste' [meta; spoudh:V] is not quite synonymous with 'immediately'; for one can do something slowly even though doing it right after something else" (GM, 321). Although his remark contrasts εὐθύς with meta; spoudh:V, he seems to limit εὐθύς to the meaning "immediately, doing it right after something else." This explanation is consistent with Gundry's handling of εὐθύς elsewhere in Mark and would reject meanings such as "quickly" as well as a conjunctive use. Gundry's argument also rests in part on the difference between two expressions in English ("with haste" and "immediately") whose semantic domains are not necessarily parallel to those of the Greek terms (εὐθύς and meta; spoudh:V). If the semantic domains of εὐθύς and meta; spoudh:V overlap at all, Gundry's argument for a distinction is inadequate. The summary given in this section suggests that εὐθύς can, indeed, overlap with meta; spoudh:V. In his discussion of 11:2 he also makes an explicit point that εὐθύς must mean "immediately" in contrast to "right after" (ibid., 624). [[>text](#)]

4. D. Daube points out that εὐθύς often indicates "the *planmassige*, steady, blow upon blow succession of events" in Mark (*The Sudden in the Scriptures*, 48). P. Ellingworth also suggests some discourse-based considerations regarding the use of εὐθύς that are worth pursuing ("How Soon is 'Immediately' in Mark?" *BT* 4 [1978]: 414-9). [[>text](#)]

5. Riley, *Making of Mark*, 217. This third category was suggested by F. C. Burkitt who argued that καὶ εὐθύς is not used in Mark in a temporal sense but as a connective equivalent to the Hebrew *waw* consecutive. The major basis for this conclusion was that εὐθύς is frequently lacking in the Sinaitic Syriac version, thus suggesting that the Syriac translators considered it unnecessary since it was viewed as equivalent to a *waw* consecutive. The explanation that Burkitt gives is included in an excursus at the end of the discussion of εὐθύς. [[>text](#)]

6. The following passages are adverbial uses of εὐθύς: 1:28, 43; 3:6; 4:15, 16, 17, 29; 5:2; 6:25, 50, 54; 7:25; 9:20, 24; 14:45. [[>text](#)]

7. Of the 41 instances of εὐθύς in Mark, 25 use this phrasing. (It is also used once in each of the other Synoptics and once in Acts.) Classical Greek uses εὐθύς ... καὶ paratactically; although this has similarities to one use of καὶ εὐθύς noted above, it is a different construction and does not appear in the NT (Smyth, *Grammar*, ? 2169). [[>text](#)]

8. Mark 4:5; 6:45; 9:15; 11:2, 3; 14:72. [[>text](#)]

9. Also notable is the fact that Mark is characterized by the "monotonous repetition of *kai* ... at the beginning of sentences. Of the approximately 583 sentences in Mark..., approximately 376, or 64.5%, begin with *kai*" (P. Ellingworth, "The Dog in the Night: A Note on Mark's Non-Use of *KAI*," *BT* 46 (1995): 125. This may be one factor in the semantic force of the combined phrase καὶ εὐθύς in Mark. [[>text](#)]

10. Mark 1:42; 2:8; 5:29, 30, 42a; 10:52. [[>text](#)]

11. Mark 1:10, 12, 18, 20, 21, 23, 29, 30; 2:12; 6:27; 8:10; 14:43; 15:1. Riley catalogs 1:28 here as well, arguing that the spread of "Jesus' fame ... could not have been instantaneous: Mk 1:28 only means that as a result of what had happened, the fame of Jesus was (then) spread abroad" (*Making of Mark*, 217). This is possible, but he does not consider the possibility that εὐθύς can mean *quickly* rather than *immediately*. [[>text](#)]

12. A recent example of this problem (and a surprising one given the careful attention applied in most areas of his work) is Gundry's commentary on Mark. In almost every instance of εὐθύς in Mark, Gundry insists that it adds some degree of emphasis. D. Holwerda's review points out such problems: "Not unlike the rabbis, Gundry discovers great significance in every particle. One hates to fault a commentator for the close grammatical and stylistic reading of a text..., but at times one is overwhelmed by so many bits of detail" ("Review of *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross*, by R. H. Gundry," *Calvin Theological Journal* 30 [1995]: 255). Gundry does tell the reader in his introduction that he approaches the text in this way: "The commentary contains an attempt to make interpretive capital out of Mark's grammar and style" (GM, 24). The result seems to be over-exegeting in many cases. J. Kleist (*The Gospel of Saint Mark*, 161-2) also insists on emphasizing rapidity in each instance. [[>text](#)]

13. *GELSD*, sect. 67.53; cf. R. Bratcher & E. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of*

Mark, HFT, vol. 2, 44. Riley argues that this statement "seems to mean that Jesus went straight to Capernaum; if so, this could not have been on the sabbath, when there would have been no casting or mending of nets: καὶ εὐθύς at Mk 1:21 can only mean 'and then on the sabbath'" (*Making of Mark*, 217). His conclusion is correct, but the objection he raises (no work on the Sabbath) is not necessarily legitimate. The events of Mark 1:14-21a *could* have taken place on a Friday, with the synagogue teaching in the evening (the Sabbath began at sundown). [[>text](#)]

14. An alternate translation might be: "and on the next Sabbath he went into the synagogue and taught" (*GELSD*, sect. 67.53). [[>text](#)]

15. GM, 73; see also 80. [[>text](#)]

16. This is an awkward verse and the translation given above has paraphrased somewhat to make the sense clear. In particular, ἡ ("there was") is not translated, the second καὶ is assumed to be resumptive, and *levgwn* is regarded as redundant in English. [[>text](#)]

17. Riley, *Making of Mark*, 217. [[>text](#)]

18. W. Howard, "Semitisms in the New Testament," appendix in MHT, 2:446. See also Taylor, *Mark*, 160. [[>text](#)]

19. MHT 3:229. This agrees closely with Burkitt's view of καὶ εὐθύς as a connective (see the excursus below). [[>text](#)]

20. MHT 4:29; see also G. Kilpatrick, "Some Notes on Markan Usage," *BT* 7 [1956]: 2-9, 51-6, 146, and BDF, sect. 102.2. [[>text](#)]

21. Riley, *Making of Mark*, 217-8. [[>text](#)]

22. Aorist verbs dominate, but they do so in every category and are thus not helpful in determining usage in any specific text. [[>text](#)]

23. F. Burkitt, *Evangelion da-Mepharreshe*, 2:89 (the quotation is incorrectly cited by J. Weiß as from vol. 1 ["εὐθύς bei Markus," *ZNW* 11 (1910): 125]). [[>text](#)]

24. A. Merx, *Die Evangelien des Markus und Lukas nach der Syrischen im Sinaikloster gefundenen Palimpsesthandschrift*, 2:15-23. (Weiß summarizes Merx's view on 125-6 of "εὐθύς bei Markus.") [[>text](#)]

25. "The single possible supposition is that the text of the synoptic Grundschrift, which they [i.e., Matthew and Luke] read, still didn't include those passages, so that they didn't represent the original Markan text but rather ornaments, expansions, abundances. To that also now belongs the frequent εὐθύς" (*ibid.*, 126). [[>text](#)]

26. "What is called genuine or not genuine here? With some certainty we may say that εὐθύς in the old Mark, which was available to Matthew and Luke, and has been missing to a wide extent; is noteworthy in that it has been in the *Heilungsgeschichten* [healing accounts] an early indication of the narrative type" (*ibid.*, 133). [[>text](#)]

27. Weiß thus agrees with Merx against Burkitt (ibid., 126, 133). [[>text](#)]

28. See pp. 157-63. [[>text](#)]

*If you don't have BenEzra font, the gibberish above is the Hebrew word wayy'omer. [[>text](#)]

Note: The above material is excerpted from pp. 157-65 of the [dissertation](#); those pages are abridged from a [longer article](#). The Hebrew font used is [BenEzra](#)--but you can probably get the gist without it. There may be a font anomaly or two, but this was a quick "port." I've added a transliteration at some points, and εὐθύς in Unicode in the title and first line. Notes are formatted as endnotes and linked to the end of this document. This article is also available in [Adobe Acrobat format](#) (.pdf file) which maintains all the formatting, pagination, and fonts from the dissertation. (Web browsers are notorious for mishandling fonts with overstrike characters--you'll probably see a lot of gaps in Greek text above, but it's sporadic.)

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