

January Structure (Janus structure)

The name of the month of January comes from Roman God Janus who is a two- faced God and is the god of doorways. One face is looking backwards and the other looks forward. The notion of taking time to look back on the previous year but then also taking time looking forward anticipating the future is a common activity at the start of a New Year. (New Year's resolutions). There are also some texts of Scripture that serve as a 'hinge' where they connect what has happened prior (looking back) but also anticipate what is to come (looking forward). This is called a Janus by literary scholars. So, at the beginning of January let us look at some passages that look backwards and forwards at the same time.

Bible Examples

Genesis: the refrain "This is the account of"

Gen 2:4 reviews what has happened in chapter 1 but also hinges the retelling of creation in Genesis 2.

Deuteronomy 22:1-22

The ten laws of Deuteronomy 22:1–12 are a 'decatalogue' that functions as a transition between laws concerning homicide or preserving life (Deut. 19:1–21:23), which are to be associated with the Sixth of the Ten Commandments - "you shall not murder"- and laws concerning sexuality (Deut. 22:13–23:14), which are to be associated with the Seventh Commandment - "you shall not commit adultery." Deut 22:1-12 is separate from Deut 19-21 but hinges with that previous passage topically on the issue of "preserving life" but it also anticipates laws of sexuality (22:13- 23:14) by dealing with forbidden "mixtures" (seed, animals, clothing) which sets up the future laws regarding forbidden sexual unions.

Ruth 1:22 "they arrived at Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest"

This verse provides a fitting conclusion for the women's journey to Bethlehem, which begins when Naomi hears that "in the fields of Moab she had heard that the Lord had taken note of His people and given them bread" (1:6) – Naomi hears that the famine is over and indeed, she arrives to witness the beginnings of a bountiful harvest. This conclusion also anticipates the next scene, when Ruth ventures out to the fields to glean from this harvest

Mark 8:22-9:1

This section serves as a 'janus'- linking Mark's central section with the Galilean narrative that precedes it. Jesus' healing of a blind man (Mk 8:22–26) and Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi (Mk 8:27–9:1) function both as the culmination of the Galilean ministry (backwards look) and as the introduction to Mark's central section focusing on his movement to Jerusalem to die on the cross (forward look). Central to this hinge is the theme of "sight" which is a key takeaway for readers who also need to "see" Jesus.

1 John 3:10 "by this"

"**By this** the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. "

This verse can be seen as a summary statement at the end of 2:28–3:10 which summarizes the section's major theme (*conduct is the proof of salvation*), and provides at the same time a transition to the theme of *loving one's brother* which will dominate the following section (3:11–24). The "by this" is both backward and forward looking. So is a person's salvation proven by their righteousness or by their loving of their fellow Christians? It is both!

Whys and So what's:

- January structures are just another example of how intricate God has designed His word!
- They often signal key transitions and unify what might not be thought of as connected.
- Reinforces the priority of the greater theme of the author (Ten Commandments. Mark)
- Solves some interpretative questions – not "either or" but "both and"! (1 John 3:10)