

LOGOS 2020 STUDY GUIDE

THE GOSPEL OF MARK 1-8

Author

The earliest manuscripts of the second Gospel are titled “According to Mark” (Gk. Kata Markon). This Heading summarizes the Church’s uniform tradition that Mark, a disciple of Simon Peter, wrote the second Gospel. Although Mark did not write as an eyewitness of Christ’s public ministry, he was a channel of apostolic tradition through Peter, who was his primary source of information about the life of Jesus. His association with Peter is evident in both the NT and the testimony of the early church. (1) Within the NT, Peter refers to his companionship with “my son Mark” in 1 Pet 5:13, and interpreters have noted that the general outline of Mark’s Gospel is similar to Peter’s presentation of the gospel in Acts 10:36-43. (2) Outside the NT, several Church Fathers insist that Peter’s authority stands behind the second Gospel. Papias (A.D. 130) describes Mark as the “interpreter” of Peter, while Irenaeus (A.D. 180), Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 200), and Tertullian (A.D. 200) echo this tradition.

Few details exist about the life and character of Mark. He is known principally by his Roman name “Mark” (Lat. Marcus) but is sometimes called by his Jewish name “John” (Acts 12:25; 15:37). He is the cousin of the missionary Barnabas according to Col 4:10. More significantly, he was an associate of the apostle Paul (Acts 12:25) and a welcome companion Paul’s first missionary journey (Acts 13:5). For reasons unstated, Mark withdrew prematurely from the mission (Acts 13:13), creating an awkward situation that later became a source of contention between him and Paul (Acts 15:36-41). At some point, however, Mark was reconciled with him and again became active in his ministry, since he is later present with Paul in Rome (Col 4:10; Philem 24), and, according to the apostle’s estimation. “he [Mark] is very useful in serving me” (2 Tim 4:11). Tradition states that after the martyrdom of Peter and Paul, Mark was the first to establish churches in Alexandria in northern Egypt.

Date

Two factors suggest that Mark completed his Gospel before A.D. 70, within one generation of the events he records. First, the Gospel itself points us in this direction. In Mk 13, Jesus prophesies the imminent destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. This was fulfilled in A.D. 70, when the Roman’s violently destroyed the Holy City. Mark, however, makes no mention of this as a past event, nor does he give detailed information about the catastrophe that would indicate he was writing after the fact. Second, prominent traditions in the early Church date Mark’s Gospel in the 60s A.D., or even earlier. Both a second-century document, called the Anti-Marcionite Prologue, and Irenaeus (A.D.180) state that Mark wrote soon after Peter’s martyrdom (C. A.D. 67)- a tradition that still allows for a date in the late 60s. Clement of Alexandria (A.D.200), on the other hand, maintains that Mark wrote his Gospel before Peter’s death. Still another witness, Eusebius (A.D. 340), fixes a date for Mark during the reign of the Emperor Cladius between A.D. 41 and 54. Although these varying traditions make it impossible for us to assign an exact date for the Gospel, they together suggest that Mark published his work sometime before A.D. 70. Many

modern scholars likewise place the composition of Mark just before A.D. 70, though some put it just after this critical date.

Destination

Mark wrote his Gospel primarily for Gentile believers in Imperial Rome. This is suggested by several considerations. (1) Mark regularly explains Jewish customs that would be unfamiliar to his readers (7:3-4; 14:12); (2) he translates Aramaic words and phrases (3:17; 5:41; 7:11, 34; 15:34); (3) he at times uses Latinized terms instead of their Greek equivalents (12:42; 15:16); (4) his story climaxes with a confession of faith by a Roman soldier (15:39). It is also possible that Mark's audience in Rome was the target of fierce persecution at the time of composition (the Neronian persecution ran from about A.D. 64 to 68). His Gospel, then, may have been written to remind Roman believers of the suffering endured by their Lord and to encourage them to remain faithful during their own time of trial.

structure

Mark's Gospel resists a neat and clearcut outline. As the narrator, Mark remains tucked behind his story and imposes no artificial structure on the traditions he has received; he is content, rather to present the events of Jesus' life as he learned them. For the sake of convenience, however, the Gospel may be divided into two major sections and two minor sections (see outline). The two major sections and two minor sections (1:16-8:30; 8:31-15:47) comprise most of Mark's narrative and consist of various events that gradually build in momentum toward a climactic confession of faith. In the first movement (1:16-8:30), the story culminates with Peter's testimony, "You are the Christ" (8:29), a confession that stands out amid the surrounding confusion about Jesus' identity (8:28). Similarly, the second movement (8:31-15:47) ascends gradually and peaks with the centurion's declaration, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" (15:39), which also stands in contrast to the surrounding taunts leveled at Jesus (15:29-32, 36). The Gospel's two minor sections (1:1-15; 16:1-20) are small in size but greater in importance. The Prologue (1:1-15) sets the stage for Jesus, narrating the preparations leading up to his public ministry. The Epilogue (16:1-20) crowns Mark's story with the account of Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension, bringing to a climax "the gospel of Jesus Christ" anticipated since the beginning (1:1).

Themes

Mark paints a portrait of Jesus that is vivid and dynamic focusing most of his attention on Jesus' mighty works. Apart from two lengthy sermons (4:1-32; 13:1-37), Mark depicts Jesus as an active healer and exorcist continually on the move – a feature the evangelist accentuates by using the word "immediately" over forty times in his mere sixteen chapters! In addition, Mark's Gospel engages the Christian reader with a number of rhetorical questions and statements that punctuate the story: "What is this? A new teaching!" (1:27); "Why does this man speak like this? . . . Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (2:7); "Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?" (4:41); "But who do you say that I am?" (8:29); "And what I say to you I say to all: Watch" (13:37). These statements address the attentive reader much as they address characters in the story. They invite every believer to look at Jesus with the eyes of faith, embrace him in hope, and imitate his heroic love.

The content of Mark's story revolves primarily around the identity of Jesus. Two aspects figure prominently: Jesus' secret and his divine Sonship. (1) *Secret*. In Mark, Jesus often attempts to conceal his identity as the Messiah because of the great possibility that his contemporaries will misunderstand his mission. During NT times, many in Israel expected the Messiah to liberate them from the oppressive rule of the Romans. For this reason they awaited an outstanding royal and military figure to subdue their enemies and reestablish the earthly kingdom of David in Jerusalem (11:10). Jesus distances himself from these popular, but mistaken, aspirations and instead works to conceal his messianic identity to avoid confusion about his ministry. When

unclean spirits attempt to publicize his identity. Jesus silences them (1:25,34; 3:12). When men try to announce Jesus as a miracle worker or Messiah, he orders them not to (5:43; 7:36; 8:26, 30; 9:9). Far from embracing the role of a political leader, Jesus labors to reconfigure messianic expectations through his example of servant hood and suffering. The true Messiah liberates God's people from the burdens of Satan, sickness, and sin-not the yoke of an earthly empire (1:27,34,41; 2:5,17; 3:5,10; 5:41; 7:37). (2) *Sonship* The divine Sonship of Jesus is also a leading theme in Mark. It could be said, in fact, that recognizing Jesus as the divine Son of God is the goal of Mark's Gospel. Ironically, Jesus' Sonship and Incarnations are mysteries hidden from most of the Gospel's characters, despite repeated suggestions and hints pointing in this direction. As the narrator, Mark introduces Jesus from the outset as "the Son of God" (1:1). The demons are aware of it (3:11; 5:7), God the Father twice proclaims it in public (1:11; 9:7), and Jesus himself affirms it in no uncertain terms (14:61-62). Only at the Crucifixion is the Sonship of Jesus fully recognized as he surrenders his life with love to the father. It is here that a single Gospel character (Roman Centurion) confesses Jesus as "the son of God" (15:39). Mark's Gospel proclaims this mystery of Christ's Sonship in story form and seeks both to inform and to challenge readers with this central truth of the gospel.

OUTLINE OF THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT MARK

- 1. Prologue preparations for the Messiah and His Forerunner (1:1-15):**
 - A. Preaching and Ministry of John the Baptist (1:1-8)
 - B. Baptism of Jesus by John (1:9-11)
 - C. Testing of Jesus by Satan (1:12-13)
 - D. Jesus Begins to Preach the Gospel (1:14-15)

- 2. Public ministry: The Messiah's Secret and His Widespread Ministry (1:16-8:30)**
 - A. Jesus Becomes Popular and Controversial in Galilee (1:16-3:12)
 - B. Jesus Teaches the Apostles through Words and Deeds (3:13-7:23)
 - C. Jesus Travels to Gentile Regions (7:24-8:30)

- 3. Passion Narrative: The Suffering Messiah and Passion Week Narratives (8:31-15:47)**
 - A. Passion Predictions and Formation of Disciples on the Way to Jerusalem (8:31-10:52)
 - B. Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem and His conflict in the Temple (11:1-13:37)
 - C. Last supper, Trials, and Crucifixion of Jesus (14:1-15:47)

- 4. Resurrection Epilogue: The Risen Messiah and Easter Narratives (16:1-20)**
 - A. Empty Tomb of Jesus (16:1-8)
 - B. Resurrection Appearances and Great commissions (16:9-18)
 - C. Jesus' Ascension and the Spread of the Gospel (16:19-20)

Study Notes

The beginning: The opening verse is a title for the entire Gospel. **the gospel:** The “good news” that Christ has come to rescue all nations from sin, selfishness, and Satan and to *reveal* the inner life of God to the world. This is accomplished as Jesus inaugurates the kingdom of God (1:15). **the son of God:** The predominant title for Jesus in Mark (1:1;3:11; 5:7; 9:7; 12:6; 14:61; 15:39). Both the works (miracles) and words (teaching) of Jesus substantiate this claim to divine Sonship, while the Father announces it publicly at his Baptism (1) and Transfiguration (9:7).

1:2-3 Mark outlines the mission of John and Jesus by splicing together three OT passages: Is 40:3, Ex 23:20, Mal 3:1.

1:5 baptized by him: The baptism of John signified the need for inner purity but did not effect this in a sacramental way. **in the river Jordan:** The main river in Palestine and a suitable location to baptize large numbers.

1:6 John was clothed: Garments of animal skin were the distinctive attire of OT prophets (Zech 13:4).

1:7 I am not worthy: Evidence of John’s humility. Removing and carrying **sandals** was a menial task reserved for slaves serving their master. John regards himself as under worthy to perform even a slave’s task for the Messiah.

1:9-11 The Baptism of Jesus. As who one is sinless, Jesus has no actual need for repentance (Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 2:22). He nevertheless receives John’s baptism to identify with sinners as part of the Father’s plan to save them.

1:10 the heaven opened: The underlying expression is more dramatic than the translation, since the Greek verb *schizo* means to “rip” or “tear”. Heaven was thus “torn open” at the sound of God’s voice and the descent of the Spirit (Is 64:1). Elsewhere in Mark this same verb depicts the tearing of the Temple veil (15:38), an episode similarly accompanied by a declaration of Jesus’ Sonship (15:39). **a dove:** An image with various associations in the Bible (song 1:15; 6:9; Hos 11:11; Mt 10:16).

1:11 my beloved Son: The Father’s announcement echoes several OT passages.

1:12-13: An abridged account of Jesus’ temptation.

1:14 John was arrested: A pivotal event turning the focus of Jesus’ ministry to Galilee. Prior to this, Jesus had an earlier ministry in Judea that overlapped with John’s (Jn 3:23). See note on Mt 4:12.

1:15 the kingdom of God: God’s sovereign rule over all nations through Jesus.

1:16-20: The first disciples respond to Jesus **immediately** (1:18,20). His compelling invitation to **follow** as a disciple is Jesus’ initial step toward sending missionaries into the world as **fishers of men** (Mt 28:18-20). Christ chooses men of modest education to demonstrate to the world that the wisdom of the gospel stems directly from God and not the ingenuity of man.

1:20 left their father: Such an abrupt break with family and livelihood was extraordinary then as now. The impulse to abandon everything and follow Jesus highlights the surpassing excellence of Christian discipleship over every worldly pursuit. **hired servants:** Suggests that the fishing enterprise of Zebedee and his sons was prosperous.

1:21 Capernaum: Jesus’ new home and headquarters in Galilee (2:1; Mt 4:12-13). It is located on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. **On the Sabbath:** The seventh day of the Jewish week set aside for worship and rest (Gen 2:3; Ex 20:8-11). Since Jews number the days from sunset to sunset, the Sabbath begins every Friday evening and ends at sundown Saturday. **Synagogue:** A small building used as a gathering place for prayer, worship, and instruction in the Scriptures.

1:23 an unclean spirit: A demon or fallen angel (3:11;5:2; 6:7;9:25). He confesses that Jesus is the “Holy One” (1:24) out of fear, not genuine faith (cf. Jas 2:19).

1:27 With authority: Divine power is displayed through Jesus’ word. While most exorcists of the day recited lengthy incantations or used odorous roots to expel demons. Jesus simply commands the spirits and they leave. The demons capability to resist him is shown by their dramatic exhibition of “convulsing” and “crying” (1:26).

1:32 That evening: i.e., after sunset on the Sabbath (Saturday). Bringing the sick demon –possessed to Jesus was laborious and thus unlawful before the Sabbath day ended. See note on Mk 1:21

1:35 in the morning: Following Mark’s chronology, Jesus prayed early Sunday morning following the Sabbath.

1:40 A Leper: Leprosy was a skin disease that made victims unclean, i.e., unfit to participate in the liturgical life of Israel (Lev 13:1-8). Because ritual uncleanness was considered contagious under the Old Covenant – infecting everyone who came in contact with it-lepers were isolated from society to keep those who were unclean (Lev 13:45-46).

1:44 say nothing to any one: The “messianic secret” is a leading theme in Mark. Jesus frequently enjoins silence on demons (1:25, 34;3:12) and men (5:43; 7:36; 8:30; 9:9) to conceal his identity as the Messiah. Several considerations account for this strategy. (1) Jesus wanted to avoid a sensationalist reputation of being no more than a wonder worker. Publicizing his deeds by word of mouth comes with the danger that rumors will begin to disconnect his miracles from his saving message. (2) He wanted to sidestep popular expectations that the Messiah would be a political and military leader. (3) He did not wish to ignite the wrath of his enemies before the appointed time of his passion. See introduction: Themes. **Show yourself:** The Mosaic Law required Levitical priests to inspect lepers and determine their status as clean or unclean (Lev 14:1-32). With approval, an individual pronounced clean would offer sacrifices at the Temple to be reinstated in the worshipping community of Israel.

2:1-12 The healing of the paralytic reveals Jesus’ identity through his actions: he claims to forgive sins as only God can forgive and to channel that forgiveness to the world as only the Jerusalem Temple and priesthood were authorized to under the Old Covenant.

2:6 the scribes: Scholars of the Mosaic Law and its traditional interpretation. With the exception of one episode (12:28-34), they are cast as Jesus’ adversaries in Mark.

2:7 It is blasphemy! The scribes are incensed that Jesus’ claims for himself a prerogative that belongs only to God: the power to remit sins (Ps 103:3; Is 43:25). They have misjudged the matter as blasphemy, which was a capital crime in ancient Israel (Lev 24:16).

2:9 Which is easier: Forgiveness is easier to claim than to accomplish, since its effects cannot be verified by observation. For this reason, Jesus restores the man’s body as a visible demonstration of what he has already done invisibly in his soul.

2:14 Levi: Also called “Matthew” (Mt 9:9). He abandoned his occupation to follow Jesus and was later named an apostle (3:18). **the tax office:** The Pharisees despised tax collectors as “sinners” (2:15) for several reasons. (1) Collecting revenue in Galilee involved frequent contact with Gentiles. By Pharisaic standards, this meant that collectors were exposed to the ritual defilement of the pagans. (2) Since taxes were

collected for the unwelcome Romans, who ruled Palestine, collectors were branded as traitors to Israel's hope for national independence. **(3)** Collectors were sometimes guilty of extortion, exacting personal commissions above the required tax amount.

2:15-28 Three controversies between Jesus and the Pharisees. In each, the Pharisees try to discredit Jesus as a spiritual leader (2:16,18,24). They consider his behavior questionable and even dangerous, as though Jesus were leading Israel away from true covenant holiness. (1) In 2:15-17, the Pharisees are scandalized by those *with whom* Jesus eats (tax collectors, sinners). (2) In 2:18-22, they question why he eats with his disciples instead of fasting like John's followers. **(3)** 2:23-28 the issue concerns when his disciples pluck and eat grain of the Sabbath). These tensions reach the breaking point with the Pharisees' conspiracy to eliminate Jesus (3:6).

2:16 eating with sinners: Table –fellowship was symbolic of personal acceptance and mutual friendship in the ancient Near East Jesus' open association with outcasts thus violates the standards of the **Pharisees**, who regarded **sinners** and **tax collectors** as inappropriate company for the religious Jew. The clung to Old Covenant standards of holiness that required Israelites to separate themselves from all sources of uncleanness including fellowship with Gentiles (Acts 10:28). Jesus exemplifies New Covenant holiness, which extends mercy to everyone in imitation of the Father (Mt 5:43-48).

2:17 no need of a physician: A well-known proverb. Jesus adapts it to imply that table-fellowship is central to his healing mission. Just as doctors do not avoid the sick, so Jesus cannot avoid those wounded by sin. **not to call the righteous:** Jesus did not come to prolong the Old Covenant with the nation of Israel. This was an imperfect, provisional covenant designed to separate Israel from the Gentiles and their sins (Lev 20:26) while Israel was not ready to love God from the heart (Jer 11: 8 Mt 19:8). Jesus inaugurates the New Covenant to transform the heart of his people (Jer 31:31-34; Mt 5:8) and so we comes all into God's covenant family. Whereas the Old Covenant quarantined Israel from the world, the New Covenant embraces the world within God's mercy (Rom 11:32).

2:19 the bridegroom: Jesus uses marital imagery to reveals his divinity. **they cannot fast:** Since fasting symbolize mourning and separation, it was inappropriate while Jesus was present among, the disciples.

2:21-22 Because the Old Covenant has become like an **old garment** and **old wineskins**, the New Covenant can neither be stitched to its worn fibers or poured into its brittle skins. Rather way to the feasting and celebration of the New Covenant that Jesus brings into the world.

2:24 not lawful on the sabbath: Although Deut 23:25 permits the Israelites to pluck and eat standing grain, the Pharisees indict the disciples under the law of Ex 34:21, which forbids harvesting on the sabbath (Ex 20:8-11). Resolved to discredit him, the Pharisees equate plucking grain with harvesting it.

2:25 have you never read: A stinging insult to the educated Pharisees. See note on Mt 12:3. what David did: Jesus recalls 1 Sam 21:1-6 to shed light on the present circumstances.

2:26 when Abiathar was high priest: The priest who provided David with bread was actually Ahimelech, Abaiathar's father (1 Sam 21:1). This apparent discrepancy causes

some modern scholars to accuse Jesus of misquoting Scripture, although this conclusion is unnecessary.

2:27 the sabbath: A day for physical rest and spiritual worship (Gen 2:1-3; Ex 20:8-11). It reminded the Israelites weekly of their total dependence upon God. The Pharisees, however, made observance of the sabbath according to their own standards a stringent test of Jewish faithfulness. Whoever disobeyed the minute sabbath regulations codified by the Pharisees was automatically suspected of religious laxity or compromise.

3:4 Is it lawful . . . ?: Jesus implies that doing good for the sake of mercy or necessity does not constitute a violation of the sabbath. One should abstain from servile from works, not good works. **or to kill?:** An alarming alternative to saving life. Common sympathy might allow for the preservation of life on the sabbath, but not its destruction.

3:6 Pharisees . . . Herodians: Two religious and political groups in NT Palestine. They held opposite political stances and outlooks on Jewish life but stood united in their opposition to Jesus.

3:7-12 Jesus gains widespread popularity with the crowds. Although they perceive him as a powerful healer and exorcist, the demons know his true identity as God's Son (3:11). Jesus' popular appeal here stands in contrast to 3:6 and the resentment of the Pharisees and Herodians.

3:14 he appointed twelve: Jesus spent the entire night in prayer before selecting the apostles (Lk 6:12).

3:22 Beelzebul: A pagan god worshipped at Ekron (see Baalzebub 2 Kings 1:2-16). The name probably meant "prince Baal". The scribes use it as a disdainful title for Satan. **by the prince of demons:** it was commonly held that weaker demons could be exorcised by more powerful ones. The scribes wrongfully attribute Jesus' power to the sorcery of Satan, the most powerful demon of all (Mt 9:34; 10:25).

3:24-25 By ascribing the power of Jesus to Satan, the scribes reveal their own collaboration with the devil's **kingdom**. Satan's **house** will fall because Christ will conquer him, not because his demons are weakened by divisions within their own ranks (Heb 2:14; 1 Jn 3:8).

3:29 an eternal sin: The scribes utter blasphemy by attributing to Satan what is actually the work of the Holy Spirit (3:22,30). Their sin is not unforgivable in principle since no sin can place us beyond the reach of God's mercy. However, blasphemy **against the Holy Spirit** is a form of rebellion that is particularly grievous because it blinds people to their own need for forgiveness; in this case, sins are unpardonable when they are not confessed with contrition.

3:32 your brethren: Jesus' cousins or related kinsmen.

3:35 the will of God: Obedience to the Father is more important than being related to Jesus biologically. Baptized Christians are children of God and brothers and sisters of Jesus through the Holy Spirit (Jn 1:12; Rom 8:29; Heb 2:10-11). Membership in this New Covenant family is maintained through a life conforming to God's will (Mt 7:21). **brother . . . sister . . . mother. . .** : Christ widens the scope of his spiritual family *to include his disciples, not to exclude his Mother or his biological relatives*.

4:2 in parables: A teaching method with two purposes. (1) Parables conceal Jesus' message from the faithless, so that the stories and scenes from everyday life no impact on those who react to his claims with opposition and violence. See note on Mk 4:12. (2)

Parables also reveal the mystery of Jesus' mission to those who believe and embrace his message. In short, the parables draw us into divine mysteries according to the measure and intensity of our faith (4:33).

4:3-8 The parable of the **sower**. Jesus places himself in a long line of OT prophets whose message was received by some but rejected by many (Mt 23:37; Heb 11:32-38). Jesus is the sower whose message likewise elicits diverse responses. The condition of the **soil** in each scenario determines one's reaction to Jesus. Three responses prove unfruitful: those like the **path** are corrupted by Satan (4:15); those like **rocky ground** are hampered by weak and partial commitments to the gospel (4:17); those with **thorns** are entangled in the distractions and concerns of the world (4:19). Jesus' graphic language (**devoured, scorched, choked**; 4:4,6-7) underscores the opposition facing the gospel. In contrast, the **good soil** is receptive to God's word and yields an abundant harvest.

4:11 To you has been given: Jesus explains his parables to the inner circle of disciples. By instructing them privately, he prepares them for their future role as teacher's and stewards of God's mysteries (16:15,20; 1 Cor 4:1).

4:14-20 Jesus explains the parable to his disciples only when they are "alone" (4:10). The crowd "outside" is not privileged to hear its interpretation (4:11).

4:26-29 An agricultural parable found only in Mark. Jesus compares the mystery of natural, organic growth to the expansion of the **kingdom of God**. The kingdom will visibly mature like grain, but the spiritual forces behind it will remain invisible. The parable of the Leaven Mt 13:33 elucidates the same mystery.

4:29 the harvest: The day of God's manifestation and judgment (Jer 51:33; Joel 3:13 Mt 13:39; Rev 14:15).

4:30-32 The parable of the Mustard seed. It is based on the difference between the **smallest** seed and the **greatest** shrub and depicts how Christ's **kingdom** begins with a small band of disciples and gradually grows into a worldwide Church.

4:35-41 Jesus manifests his divinity by exercising authority over nature.

5:1 Gerasenes: Gerasa is one of the cities of the "Decapolis" (5:20), a confederation of ten cities NT Palestine. They were predominantly Gentile in population, and most of them were located east of the Jordan River. The presence of "swine" in 5:11 reinforces this Gentile context, since the Jews would never herd animals that God declared unclean (Lev 11:7-8).

5:9 Legion: The term for an armed regiment of nearly 6,000 Roman soldiers. It points to the overwhelming presence of demons in the man and accentuates the intensity of spiritual combat between Jesus and forces of evil. Matthew indicates that two men approached Jesus suffering from demonic possession (Mt 8:28).

5:13 into the sea: Biblical symbolism associated with the sea is diverse and flexible.

5:19 the Lord has done for you: Hints at Jesus' divinity (cf. 2:28; 11:3; 12:37). The parallel text in Lk 8:39 has "God"

5:21-43: Two miracle stories connected chronologically and thematically. Both highlight Jesus' power over physical sickness (5:29,42) and his favorable response to faith (5:23, 34,36). The accounts are also linked by the figure **twelve years**, which represents the duration of the woman's illness (5:25) and the age of the young girl (5:42).

5:23 lay your hands on her: Often in the Gospels Jesus responds to the persistent pleas of parents whose children are suffering or in danger (7:25-30; 9:17-27; Mt 17:14-18; Jn 4:46-54). His mercy touches these distressed parents whenever they turn to him in faith. Jesus also displays deep affection for children (10:13-16; Mt 18:5-6).

5:25 a flow of blood: A condition that makes the woman and everything she touches legally unclean (Lev 15:25-30). This excludes her full participation in the covenant life of Israel. To the crowd's astonishment, Jesus removes her uncleanness by physical contact, not in spite of it.

5:37 Peter . . . James . . . John : Three of Jesus' closest disciples, who were also present with him at the Transfiguration (9:2) and in the garden of Gethsemane (14:33). They are the only apostles Jesus renamed: Simon became "Peter", which means "rock", while James and John were called "Boanerges", which means "sons of thunder" (3:16-17).

5:39 not dead but sleeping: Biblical writers often speak of "sleep" as a euphemism for biological death (Mt 27:52; Jn 11:11; 1 Cor 5:6). Jesus uses this description to emphasize that the girl's condition is only temporary and reversible.

5:41 Talitha cumi: One of several Aramaic expressions preserved in Mark (7:11, 34; 14:36; 15:22,34). He regularly translates these expressions for his non Jewish readers .

6:1 his own country: Nazareth, the Galilean village where Jesus was raised (Mt 2:23). Following an earlier incident recorded in Lk 4:16-30, this episode marks the second rejection of Jesus by his kinsfolk.

6:3 brother. . . his sisters: Jesus' cousins or more distant relatives. They are not siblings from the same Virgin Mother.

6:4 not without honor: Jesus adapts a common proverb to explain his rejection: like the OT prophets before him, Jesus is persecuted and rejected for preaching the word of the Lord (Mt 5:11-12; Heb 11:32-38). Jesus is often called a prophet in the Gospels (Mt 21:11; Lk 7:16; 13:33; 24:19; Jn 4:19).

6:7-13 Jesus dispatches the Twelve **two by two** as emissaries to the surrounding Galilean towns (Mt 10:5-6). It is his authority that empowers their ministry of exorcism, healing, and preaching (Mt 10:). Their mission is a training exercise for leadership in the Church, when they will be summoned to embrace evangelical poverty (6:8-9) and to trust in God for daily provisions (6:11).

6:11 shake off the dust: A symbolic act of judgment for those who reject the apostle's preaching.

6:13 anointed with oil: A symbol of healing and a medicinal agent in the ancient world (Is 1:6; Lk 10:34).

6:14-29 A narrative "flashback" on past events. Mark recounts this episode to dispel rumors that John the Baptist and Jesus are the same person (6:16; 8:28). John's execution foreshadows both the death of Jesus (9:12; 10:32-34) and the martyrdom of other believers in the early Church (Rev 20:4).

6:14 King Herod: Herod Antipas. After the death of Herod the great (4/1 B.C.), the Roman Emperor Augustus divided the kingdom in Palestine among three of Herod's sons. Herod Antipas was the son who received the title "tetrarch" (Mt 14:1) and governed the regions of Galilee and Perea until A.D 39. His brothers Archelaus and Philip were apportioned the remainder of their late father's territory. Since "tetrarch" is not strictly a

royal title, the use of “King” here probably reflects popular usage and is not intended literally (Mt 14:9).

6:18 your brother’s wife: John the Baptist was imprisoned and executed for publicly repudiating the illicit union of Herod Antipas and Herodias, the wife of his half-brother Philip. According to Lev 18:16 and 20:21, the Mosaic Law forbids the union of a man with his brother’s wife when the brother is still living. Since Philip was alive and well, the marriage between Antipas and Herodias was no marriage at all – it was adultery.

6:23 Whatever you ask me: Herod’s oath recalls a similar banquet scene in Esther 5-7.

6:24 The head of John: The prompt response of Herodias, in light of her “grudge” against John (6:19), suggests his demise was premeditated. The careless oath of Herod Antipas afforded the opportune moment for Herodias to implement her plan (6:26).

6:26: exceedingly sorry: Herod’s remorse is overshadowed by his injustice. His reputation before the prestigious company of high officials (6:21) was more important to him than a fair trial and, ultimately, John’s life.

6:35-44 The miracle of the loaves both to the past and to the future (1) It recalls miraculous feedings from the OT, like the heavenly manna God provided for Israel in the wilderness (Ex 16) and the multiplied loaves and leftover baskets provided by Elisha (2 Kings 4:42-44). (2) It also anticipates the later institution of the Eucharist, where the same string of verbs (taking . . .broke. . . gave) is found together, something that occurs only here and at the Last supper (14:22).

6:37 two hundred denarii: A single “denarius” is equivalent to a laborer’s daily wage. Over half a year’s wages would be required to purchase food for the multitude.

6:41 gave them to the disciples: Jesus does not give the multiplied bread directly to the crowds but distributes it to them by the hands of his apostles.

6:45 Bethsaida: Located on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. It is the hometown of Peter, Andre, and Philip (Jn 1:44; 12:21).

6:48 the fourth watch: Between 3 and 6 A.M. The evening hours between 6 P.M. and 6 A. M were divided into four “watches” (13:35).

6:50 it is I: Or, “I am”. Jesus takes for himself the divine name “I AM” that God revealed to Moses at the burning bush (Ex 3:14). This claim to divinity is corroborated as Jesus does what only God can do: he treads upon the sea (Job 9:8).

6:53 Gennesaret: A village on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee.

6:56 the fringe of his garment: Moses instructed the Israelites to wear tassels on their clothing as visible reminders to keep God’s commandments (Num 15:38-40).

7:3 the tradition of the elders: Religious customs manufactured by the Pharisees and added to the Mosaic Law. sometimes called the oral Law, this body of rituals was designed to supplement God’s written Law and intensify its requirements of ritual purity. these traditions were passed on orally until recorded in the Jewish Mishnah about A.D. 200. Here the controversy is sparked by the “unwashed” hands of the disciples (7:2). The Pharisees charge them, not with poor hygiene, but with religious laxity. Jesus responds with a vigorous attack on these Pharisaic customs because they distract practitioners from the more important principles of the Mosaic Law (7:8-9). That is, they emphasize the dangers of ritual impurity (on the hands) to the neglect of moral defilement (in the heart) defined by the commandments (7:20-23). In the end, these

traditions promoted by the elders are examples of merely human tradition that the Pharisees have wrongly elevated to an equal level with the revealed Law of God.

7:6-7 A reference to Is 29:13. Isaiah reprimands Jerusalem for consulting its politicians while rejecting the prophets. Because their leaders routinely exclude the Lord from foreign policy decisions and rely instead on their own wisdom, their worship of the Lord has become empty and vain. No longer, says Isaiah, will Yahweh tolerate their lip service when their hearts are devoid of living faith. The Pharisees have fallen into the same trap of rejecting God's wisdom in favor of their own (Mt 23:23; Col 2:20-23). As a result, their venerated traditions are empty and in dangerous competition with God's will as revealed in the gospel.

7:11 Corban: Aramaic for "offering". It denotes something dedicated to God for a religious purpose. It often consisted of money or property donated by vow to the Temple. Jesus denounces the abuse of this practice: giving gifts to the Temple does not exempt children from the obligation of honoring their parents through financial support (Ex 20:12; Deut 5:16).

7:19 all foods clean: An editorial comment by Mark. Since Jesus traces true defilement back to the heart (7:21), the outward distinctions between clean and unclean as defined by the Old Covenant are no longer operative or binding in the New. These ceremonial distinctions have been superseded in two ways: (1) Ritual defilement was an external matter under the Old Covenant, whereas the New Covenant penetrates to cleanse and govern the inward life of believers (Mt 5:8; Acts 15:9). (2) Since Mosaic food laws effectively separated Israel from the Gentiles, these dietary restrictions were set aside in the New Covenant once Jews and Gentiles were gathered together into the same covenant family. The early Church grappled much with the issues surrounding Old Covenant dietary laws and table-fellowship in light of the gospel (Acts 10:9-16; Rom 14:13-23; Gal 2:11-16).

7:21 the heart of man: In biblical terminology, the heart is the center of the person and the source of every decision that manifests itself through deeds. Jesus thus links true defilement with the heart, where evil actions and intentions have their hidden beginning (Mt 5:28). His inventory of vices is similar to others in the NT (Rom 1:29-31; Gal 5:19-21; 1 Pet 4:3).

7:24 Tyre and Sidon: Two Phoenician cities on the Mediterranean coast, north of Palestine. They were predominantly Gentile in population and thus contemptible to the Jews (Ezek 26:1-28:26; Joel 3:4-8).

7:27 the children first: The children of Israel hold first claim to the blessings of the New Covenant (Mt 15:24; Rom 1:16; 9:4-5). Only after Jesus' Resurrection is the gospel systematically proclaimed to all nations (Mt 28:18-20; Act 1:8). **dogs:** Often a derogatory term in the Bible (1 Sam 17:43; Phil 3:2; Rev 22:15). Jesus uses it to illustrate the progress of the gospel: just as children are fed before pets, so the gospel is offered to Israel before the Gentiles. The woman's acceptance of this epithet reveals her humility, and her unwillingness to be turned away reveals her perseverance (7: 28-29).

7:31 the Decapolis: This setting indicates that Jesus continued to travel and minister in Gentile territory. See note on Mk 5:1.

7:33 Privately: Reflects Jesus' intention to conceal his identity.

7:34 Ephphatha: An Aramaic expression that Mark translates for his Gentile readers.

7:37 the deaf. . . the mute: Recalls the messianic blessings prophesied in Is 35:4-6 (Wis 10:21).

8:1-10 An episode similar to the miracle in 6:35-44, but dissimilar in several details. Jesus multiplies **Seven** (8:5) loaves instead of live (6:38), collects **Seven** (8:8) leftover baskets instead of twelve (6:43), and feeds **four thousand** (8:9) people instead of 5,000 (6:44). The symbolism of these figures is examined in 8:18-21.

8:2 I have compassion: The lack of food in this episode illustrates how Jesus rewards the crowd for their perseverance, despite natural discomforts like hunger (8:2).

8:6 given thanks: A translation of the Greek verb *eucharisteo* which is the basis for the English word “Eucharist”. Jesus multiplication of bread after giving thanks foreshadows the Last Supper and the Institution of the Blessed Sacrament (1 Cor 11:24).

8:10 Dalmanutha: An unknown location in Galilee also called “Magadan” (Mt 15:39).

8:11 a sign from heaven: Jesus refuses to perform miracles on demand, especially not for Pharisees who are plotting to destroy him (3:6). They are like the Israelites in the wilderness who refused to believe in God. after seeing numerous signs in Egypt (Num 14:11).

8:15 the leaven: A metaphor based on the “one loaf” in the boat (8:14). Jesus warns the disciples that as leaven permeates and expands bread, so the **Pharisees** and their teaching exert a corruptive influence on the crowds (Mt 16:11-12). Similar imagery is used elsewhere in the NT (Lk 12:1; Cor 5:6-8; Gal 5-9). Herod: Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee. He was interested in Jesus primarily as a miracle worker (Lk 23:8). See note on 6:14.

8:19-21 Jesus rehearses the figures in both miracles of the loaves (6:35-44; 8:1-10). While the symbolism of these numbers is nowhere made explicit, they most likely signify the nations who hear the gospel. The **twelve** (8:19) leftover baskets from the first episode represent the twelve tribes of Israel that Jesus gathers into the Church (Mt 15:24; 19:28). The **seven** (8:20) baskets of the second miracle represent the seven Gentile nations who once occupied the land of Canaan alongside Israel (Deut 7:1) and to whom Christ subsequently offers salvation. Jesus’ previous conversation with the syrophenician (Canaanite) woman in 7:24-30 already established the point that Israel’s leftover bread would be given to Gentiles. Together these figures point to the international dimensions of the New Covenant (Rom 1:16; Gal 3:28).

8:22-26 A unique miracle performed in stages. It has multiple significance in Mark: Jesus not only healed the man, but he also heals the spiritual deafness and blindness of the disciples (8:18-21). Although they are still uncertain about his true identity, Jesus sharpens their vision to recognize him as messiah in the following episode (8:29).

8:27-10:52 Seven times in this section reference is made to “the way”, although this (Greek) motif is muted through various translations like “journey”, “road”, and “roadside” (8:27; 9:33-34; 10:17, 32, 46,52). At the narrative level. it depicts the steady movements of Jesus on “the way” to Jerusalem. On a theological level, Jesus is teaching that “the way” to heavenly glory is “the way” of heroic suffering. He first clears “the way” through his own passion and then summons disciples to follow in his footsteps (1 Pet 2:21; 4:13).

8:27 Caesarea Philippi: A gentile city beyond the northern border of Palestine. See note on Mt 16:13. **Who do men . . .?:** Popular opinion agreed that Jesus was a prophet, but there was no consensus about *which* prophets he was (8:28; 6:14-15).

8:29 You are the Christ: i.e., Israel's Messiah and king. Peter's confession is the climax of the first half of Mark's Gospel. To counteract expectations that the Messiah would be a purely political and military figure, Jesus immediately instructs the disciples about the suffering and shame he will have to face to accomplish his mission (8:31-33). See note on Mt 16:16 and word study: Christ at Mk 14.

8:30 he charged them: The blessing that accompanied Simon's name change to "Peter" (3:16) is not mentioned in Mark as it is in Matthew (16:17-19). According to one ancient tradition, this omission reflects Mark's dependence upon Peter for his Gospel information, since it is likely that Peter would humbly omit from his preaching sayings of Jesus that exalt him above others. **tell no one:** Jesus enjoins silence on his disciples as part of a strategy to conceal his "messianic secret".

8:31-33: The first of three predictions regarding Jesus' Passion and Resurrection (9:30-32; 10:32-34). In this way Jesus intensifies his effort to instruct the apostles about the suffering that awaits both him and his loyal followers (8:34-37; 13:9).

8:31 the Son of man: Alludes to the royal figure described in Dan 7:13-14. Jesus often associates this title with his Passion (9:12, 31; 10:33, 45; 14:21, 41).

8:33 Satan!: Jesus rebukes Peter for rejecting the prospect of suffering. Scandalized and perhaps frightened, Peter briefly aligned himself with the mind-set of Satan, who similarly tried to divert Jesus from his mission to suffer (Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13). The Crucifixion proved to be a "stumbling block" to many of Jesus' contemporaries (1 Cor 1:23).

8:34 take up his cross: A graphic image of suffering. It refers to the Roman custom of forcing criminals to carry on their shoulders a crossbar to the site of their crucifixion (15:21; Jn 19:17). Jesus warns that disciples must be so committed to him that they are willing to endure persecution, hardship, and even death. The faithful, he assures them, will find resurrection and glory beyond the hardships of this life (Jn 12:24-26; 2 Tim 2:11).

8:38 when he comes: The Father has given Christ the authority to judge the living and the dead (Jn 5:22-29; Acts 10:42). At the appointed time he will reward the righteous with eternal life (Rom 2:7) and punish those who are **ashamed** of him with eternal fire (Mt 25:31, 41-46; 2 Tim 2:11-13). **with holy angels:** Jesus alludes to the prophecy of Zech 14:5.