

CENTRAL THEMES OF MARK'S GOSPEL

I. Introduction

A. Significance of Mark

B. Authorship

C. Date

D. Place

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B. Part One (1:16-8:26)

C. Part Two (8:27-16:8)

III. Mark's Theology

A. Kingdom of God

Mark 1:14-15. ¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." (NRSV)

1. Kingdom as Future

Enter in future. **Mark 10:23.** ²³ Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" (NRSV)

A future day. Mark 14:25. ²⁵ Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." (NRSV)

Something to wait for. Mark 4:3-20. Parable of the sower

Something to wait for. Mark 4:26-29. ²⁶ He also said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, ²⁷ and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. ²⁸ The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. ²⁹ But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come." (NRSV)

Something to wait for. Mark 4:30-32. ³⁰ He also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; ³² yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade." (NRSV)

Wait. Mark 9:1. ¹ And he said to them, "Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power." (NRSV)

Wait. Mark 15:43. ⁴³ Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. (NRSV)

S. of M. watch and wait. Mark 8:38. ³⁸ Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. (NRSV)

S. of M. watch and wait. Mark 13:24-27. ²⁴ "But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, ²⁵ and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶ Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. ²⁷ Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. (NRSV)

S. of M. watch and wait. Mark 13:33-37. ³³ Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴ It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the

doorkeeper to be on the watch. ³⁵ Therefore, keep awake-- for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, ³⁶ or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷ And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake." (NRSV)

2. Kingdom as Present

Receive the KG as a Child. **Mark 10:14-15** ¹⁴ But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. ¹⁵ Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." (NRSV)

People enter now. **Mark 10:24-25.** ²⁴ And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is to enter [present tense] the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." (NRSV)

3. The Inauguration of God's Reign

Mark 1:15. "The time is fulfilled [present], and the kingdom of God has come near [future]; repent, and believe in the good news." (NRSV)

The KG has come to pass; the "time is fulfilled" (*peplērōtai*; πεπλήρωται). Yet the verb "has come near" (*ēngiken*; ἤγγικεν) denotes nearness rather than actual presence.

B. Christology

1. Messiah

a. Affirmed as Messiah

b. Executed as Messiah (King of the Jews)

c. Suffering Messiah

2. Son of God

a. Baptism & Transfiguration

Mk. 1:1. "You are my son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased"

Mk. 9:7. "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!"

Three Jewish texts:

Gen. 22:2. He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you." (NRSV)

Psalm 2:7. I will tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my son; today I have begotten you. (NRSV)

Isa. 42:1. Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. (NRSV)

b. Parable of Wicked Tenants (Mk 12:1-12)

c. Demons (Mk 1:23-27, 3:11)

d. Trial (Mk. 14:61)

e. Crucifixion (Mk 15:39)

3. Son of Man

Twice in first-half: 2:10, 28)

Thirteen in the second half: 8:31, 38; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45; 13:26; 14:21 (2xs), 41, 62

a. “Son of Man” in Jewish Context

(i) **Ezekiel.** The Prophet Ezekiel is frequently addressed by God as “son of man” (Heb. *ben ’adam*) and told to prophesy (Ezek 2:1, 3, 6, 8; 3:1, 3, etc). The phrase SM occurs 93xs in Ezekiel.

In the first chapter of Ezekiel, the prophet has a vision. In the vision he sees God, who he describes as “the One that seemed in human [*’adam*] form” (Ezek. 1:26). God then addresses Ezekiel as a parent to a child. God calls Ezekiel, “O son of man [*ben ’adam*]” (Ezek 2:1). That is, the truly Human One calls Ezekiel a “son of the human one.”¹

Walter Wink writes: “Humanity errs in believing that it is human.... We are only fragmentarily human, fleetingly human, brokenly human.... Ezekiel’s vision intimates that only God is, as it were, really Human, and since we are made in God’s image and likeness, we are capable of becoming more truly human ourselves.”²

(ii) **Daniel.** Daniel 7 presents a vision of four great beasts like various animals and a figure “like the son of man.” The “one like a son of man” (Aramaic *bar ’enash*) receives dominion and glory and kingship from the “Ancient of Days” (Dan. 7:13).

Daniel 7:13-14, 18. ¹³ As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. ¹⁴ To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed. ... ¹⁸ But the holy ones of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever-- forever and ever." (NRSV)

(iii) **Aramaic form of self-reference.** The Aramaic, *bar ’enash*, literally, “a son of man,” can be used to refer to a “human being”. The Semitic idiom, “son of” means a member of a class. So “a son of the quiver” is an arrow (Lam. 3:13). When a speaker wanted to be modest, he would refer to himself a “son of man” or “human being.” In this way, the speaker “shows solidarity with other human beings and is subject to the same humanity.”³ For example, Mark 2:10 can be understood as Jesus claiming that, as a human, he can forgive.

(iv) **1 Enoch.** The Book of 1 Enoch, which can be dated between 50 and 100 C.E.,⁴ presents a figure called, “the Son of Man.” The phrase SM occurs sixteen times in the Similitudes (1 En. 37-71) with three different Ethiopic expressions.⁵

¹ Walter Wink, *The Human Being: Jesus and the Enigma of the Son of the Man* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002) 27.

² Walter Wink, *The Human Being: Jesus and the Enigma of the Son of the Man* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002) 26.

³ David Flusser, *Jesus* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1997):128.

⁴ Walter Wink, *The Human Being: Jesus and the Enigma of the Son of the Man* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002) 55.

⁵ Wink, *The Human Being* (2002) 56.

For example: **1 Enoch 46:1-3**. ¹ There I saw one who had a head of days, and his head was like white wool. And with him was another, whose face was **like the appearance of a man** [echoing Dan. 7:13-14]; and his face was full of graciousness like one of the holy angels. ² And I asked the angel of peace, who went with me and showed all the hidden things, about **that son of man**—who he was and whence he was (and) why he went with the Head of Days. ³ And he answered me and said to me, "This is **the son of man** who has righteousness, and righteousness dwells with him. And all the treasures of what is hidden he will reveal; for the Lord of Spirits has chosen him, and his lots has prevailed through truth in the presence of the Lord of Spirits forever. (trans. Nickelsburg & VanderKam).⁶

(v) *The Testament of Abraham*. In the T. Abraham, which is dated to the 1st or 2nd century CE, "the Son of Man" is literally the son of Adam (*ben Adam*), namely, Abel, who was murdered by Cain. God appointed Abel to be the eschatological judge, because God wanted every human being to be judged by a human being.⁷

T. Abraham 13:3. "For God said, 'I do not judge you, but every man is judged by man.'"

b. "Son of Man" in Markan Context

(i) *The authority of Jesus*.

(ii) *The suffering of Jesus*.

(iii) *The future coming of Jesus*.

(iv) *The vindication and resurrection of Jesus*.

C. Messianic Secret

William Wrede, *The Messianic Secret (Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien)* in 1901.

1. Silencing the Demons

2. Silencing the Disciples

3. Broken Silences

⁶ The translation is from the Ethiopic. 1 Enoch was originally written in Aramaic, but now exists in full in Ethiopic. George W.E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch, A New Translation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004) 13, 57-58.

⁷ *T. Abraham* refers to three judgments, one by a human, one by the twelve tribes, and the last by God (*T. Ab.* 13:3-8).

4. Correcting a false Christology

D. Discipleship in Mark

1. Disciple (*mathētēs* (μαθητής) = apprentice

2. Who are the Disciples in Mark?

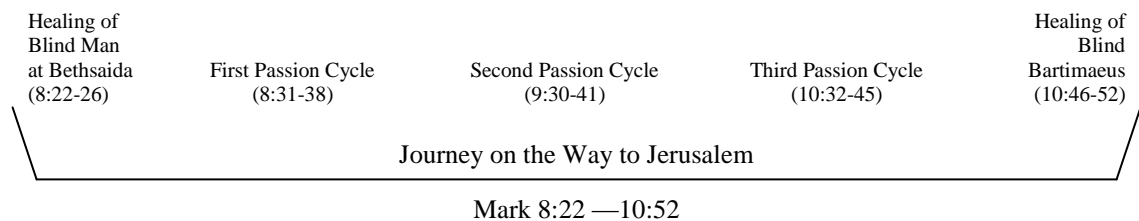
3. The Failure of the Disciples

4. The Leaven of the Pharisees and Herod

[Class exercise]

Mark 8:14-21. ¹⁴ Now the disciples had forgotten to bring any bread; and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. ¹⁵ And he cautioned them, saying, "Watch out-- beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod." ¹⁶ They said to one another, "It is because we have no bread." ¹⁷ And becoming aware of it, Jesus said to them, "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? ¹⁸ Do you have eyes, and fail to see? Do you have ears, and fail to hear? And do you not remember? ¹⁹ When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?" They said to him, "Twelve." ²⁰ "And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?" And they said to him, "Seven." ²¹ Then he said to them, "Do you not yet understand?" (NRSV)

5. The Cost of Discipleship



a. “Kingdom of God” alludes to “Entering the Promised Land”

Mk 9:1 And he said to them, "Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that **the kingdom of God has come with power.**"

Mk 9:47 And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to **enter the kingdom of God** with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell.

See also Mk 10:14; 15, 23-24, 25

Exod 23:20. I am going to send an angel in front of you, to guard you **on the way** and to bring you to the place that I have prepared.

Deut 1:8 See, I have set the land before you; **go in and take possession of the land** that I swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give to them and to their descendants after them. (Also see Deut 4:1; 6:18; 16:20).

Isa 40:3-5. 40:3 A voice cries out: "In the wilderness **prepare the way of the LORD**, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 40:4 Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. 40:5 Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

Mal 1:3. See, I am sending my messenger to **prepare the way** before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight--indeed, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. (NRSV)

b. Echoes of Moses and the Exodus

- Both Moses and Jesus descend from a mountain to unbelief (Ex 32:19; Mk 9:19);
- Both Moses and Jesus take three people up on the mountain (Ex 24:1; Mk 9:2);
- Both have a voice speaking from a cloud on the 7th day (Ex 34:29-35; Mk 9:2);
- Both discuss building tents or a tabernacle (Ex 25:9; Mk 9:5).
- Both cross over the Jordan River and come to Jericho (Josh 4:19; Mk 10:46).

c. *On the way* (*en tē hodō*; ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ)

(i) Seven occurrences

8:27 Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and **on the way** [*hodō*] he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" (NRSV)

9:33 And they came to Caper'na-um; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing **on the way** [*hodō*]" 9:34 But they were silent; for **on the way** [*hodō*] they had discussed with one another who was the greatest. (RSV)

10:1 He left ... and went ...

10:17 As he was setting out **on a journey** [*hodon*], a man ran up and knelt before him,

and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (NRSV)

10:32 They were **on the road** [*hodō*], going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them what was to happen to him. (NRSV)

10:46 They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting **by the roadside** [*hodon*]. (NRSV)

10:52 Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him **on the way** [*hodō*]. (NRSV)

(ii) Prophecy

Mark 1:2-3

1:2 See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you Exod 23:20

1:2 who will prepare your *way* Mal 3:1

1:3 the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Isa 40:3

"Prepare *the way* of the Lord,
 make his paths straight."

(iii) Suffering & Discipleship

Three Cycles	Passion Predication	Misunderstanding	Teaching on Discipleship
Mark 8	8:31	8:32-33	8:34-37
Mark 9	9:31	9:32	9:33-38
Mark 10	10:33-34	10:35-37	10:38-45

IV. Mark's Ending

V. Mark's Purpose