

Reading Mark

The Big Picture

1	John introduces Jesus	10	Jesus travels to Jerusalem
1-3	Jesus' mission in Galilee	11-13	Confrontation with leaders in Jerusalem
3-6	Jesus' mission around Galilee	14-15	Jesus' last days and crucifixion
6-9	Jesus' mission beyond Galilee	16:1-8	The empty tomb

Key Themes in Mark

- Mark's prologue (1:1-13) reveals to the reader Jesus' true identity as Israel's messiah: BUT, few of the characters in the story realize this. Reading Mark is about watching people wake up to a truth you already know from the first sentence.
- Jesus comes to announce God's kingdom (1:14-15) and to bring it into being by healing people (healing stories in chs. 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 10).
- Jesus knows people will misunderstand what it means for him to be the messiah, so he continually tries to hide his identity in public (called "the messianic secret")
 - He silences people (or spirits!) who announce his identity and tells people not to spread the word about himself: 1:25-28; 1:34, 44; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26
- People continually misunderstand Jesus and his mission:
 - People are continually astonished and afraid of Jesus: 1:22, 27; 2:12; 4:41, etc...
 - The disciples don't comprehend what it means for Jesus to be the messiah: they think he will be a conquering king, but Jesus knows he will have to be the suffering servant of Isaiah 53

Jesus Predicts his death	Disciples Misunderstand	Jesus tries to correct them
8:31	8:32-34	8:34-9:1
9:31	9:33-34	9:35-37
19:32-34	10:35-41	10:42-45
- Jesus' controversial kingdom announcement and his redefinition of what it means to be the covenant people of God attracts bitter opposition from Israel's religious authorities: Jesus is constantly challenging Israel's cherished institutions

Forgiveness of sins	2:1-12	Ritual hand-washing	7:1-13
Fasting	2:18-22	Divorce	10:2-12
Working on Sabbath	2:23-28	Clearing the temple	11:27-33
Healing on Sabbath	3:1-6	Paying taxes	12:13-17
Casting out demons	3:22-30		
- Jesus sees his death as necessary to establish the New Covenant and inaugurate God's kingdom
 - 14:45 "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many."
 - The Passover meal: 14:17-25
 - Jesus becomes Israel's king in his crucifixion: 15:16-26
- The oldest manuscripts of Mark we have end at 16:8 with the empty tomb
 - As all English translations note, 16:9-20 is a later addition to the Gospel and is not original
 - Scholars disagree whether (1) 16:8 is the original ending planned by Mark or (2) whether the end of Mark's scroll was broken off at that point so that the original ending was lost.
 - Either way, 16:8 ends with the disciples dismayed at the empty tomb. A powerful ending to a Gospel where Jesus is mysterious and breaks everyone's categories.
- The ending at 16:8 puts the question to the reader: "will you be afraid and tell no one like the disciples, or will you be bold and tell others about Jesus?" Your answer?

