

The Gospel according to Mark

- 1:1-8:26 **Ministry in Galilee**
- 1:1-13 John the Baptist and the baptism and temptation of Jesus
- 1:14-20 Announcing the kingdom and call of first disciples
- 1:21-45 Teaching and healing in Capernaum and beyond
- 2:1-17 The healing of a paralytic and the call of sinners
- 2:18-3:6 Jesus' new wine and dispute with the Pharisees
- 3:7-19 Healing of many and the appointment of the Twelve
- 3:20-35 On division between Jesus' and Satan's house
- 4:1-34 The Sower and other parables
- 4:35-41 Jesus calms the storm on the lake
- 5:1-20 The healing of the demoniac
- 5:21-43 The bleeding woman and raising of Jairus' daughter
- 6:1-6 Jesus rejected at Nazareth
- 6:7-13 The sending out of the Twelve
- 6:14-29 The death of John the Baptist
- 6:30-44 The feeding of five thousand
- 6:45-56 Jesus walks on the water
- 7:1-23 A debate about cleanness
- 7:24-37 Healing of the Syrophenician's daughter and a deaf-mute
- 8:1-21 Feeding of four thousand and the disciples' misunderstanding
- 8:22-26 Healing of a blind man
- 8:27-10:52 **On the road to Jerusalem**
- 8:27-38 Peter's confession and the first passion prediction
- 9:1-13 The transfiguration
- 9:14-29 Healing of an epileptic boy
- 9:30-50 Second passion prediction and teaching on discipleship
- 10:1-12 Teaching on divorce
- 10:13-31 On the cost of following Jesus
- 10:32-45 The third passion prediction and teaching
- 10:46-52 Jesus heals blind Bartimaeus
- 11:1-13:37 **In Jerusalem**
- 11:1-11 Jesus enters Jerusalem on a colt
- 11:12-25 The cleansing of the Temple
- 11:27-12:44 Disputes with religious leaders over authority and the law
- 13:1-37 The apocalyptic discourse
- 14:1-16:8 **Jesus' passion and resurrection**
- 14:1-11 The plot and anointing at Bethany
- 14:12-31 The last supper
- 14:32-42 In Gethsemane
- 14:43-52 The arrest of Jesus
- 14:53-72 Jesus before the high priest and Peter's denials
- 15:1-15 Jesus before Pilate
- 15:16-32 Jesus is mocked and crucified
- 15:33-47 Jesus dies and is buried
- 16:1-8 The empty tomb

Structure. The gospel hinges around Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ at Caesarea Philippi (8:27-30). Leaving Galilee and his ministry of teaching and healing behind, Jesus journeys towards Jerusalem, prophesying his passion and teaching about the demands of discipleship. A week in Jerusalem is filled with controversy with the authorities, resulting in his arrest and crucifixion. The whole is tied together by three acknowledgments that Jesus is "Son of God" (1:11; 9:7; 15:39).

A man in a hurry. Mark is the shortest (and earliest) gospel, direct and hurried in (language) style, tone and content. There are no nativity stories: as soon as Jesus is announced (1:1-8), he arrives and is baptised (1:9-11), is tempted for forty days in 2 verses (1:12,13) and begins his work with a succinct message (1:14-15) and a speedy call of some first disciples (1:16-20). Events happen “immediately” (11 occurrences in Ch.1; over 40 in the gospel), are recounted in the present tense, and often with little chronological sequence or geographical setting, but with great impact (1:32-34; 3:7-12) and great crowds gathering (1:45; 2:2; 3:8).. Mark and Jesus have “good news” (1:1, 14, 15; 8:35; 10:29; 13:10; 14:9) to tell, and proclaiming it is an urgent matter!

Kingdom authority. Jesus is shown to be a “teacher” (1:21, 22; 4:1; 6:34; cf. 4:38; 5:35) but the content of his teaching is rarely given: he is a man of action! His message concerns the presence of the kingdom of God (1:15), announced with “authority” (1:27) and demonstrated by his power over demons and illness (1:25-26, 30-31, 32-34, 40-44; 3:1-5, 5:1-20, 22-34, 35-43, etc) and other supernatural deeds (2:10-12; 4:36-41, 6:35-44, 47-51, etc), evoking people’s awe (1:27; 2:12; 4:41; 5:15; 6:2; 7:37): this is the “new wine” of the kingdom (2:19-22) growing in an unexpected way (4:26-29, 30-32).

Conflict. Jesus’ authority draws him into conflict with the religious leaders (2:8, 16, 24); which becomes the locus for direct teaching about “true religion” (2:9, 17, 19-22, 25-27). The conflict is ultimately between God’s servant and the power of Satan (3:21-27), between faith (5:23, 34) and disbelief (4:40; 5:17; 6:5-6). (See the parable of the Sower: 4:1-20). Even Jesus’ family (3:21, 31-35) and kindred (6:1-6) choose the wrong side! The religious leaders certainly do; they dispute with Jesus (7:1-15; 8:11-15; 10:1-12; 11:27-33; 12:13-40) and conspire to destroy him (3:6; 11:18; 12:12; 14:1-2).

Followers. From the beginning Jesus calls disciples to “follow him” (1:16-20; 2:14), to be with him (cf. 9:2-8; 14:33) and twelve (a sign of the new Israel) to share his work of preaching, teaching and healing (6:7-13). But even the chosen few fail to show faith (4:38; 9:18) and don’t understand him (6:52; 7:18; 8:17-18). Most of all they fail to grasp his passion predictions and the implications of the self-denying way of the cross (cf. 8:32; 9:33-34; 10:35-37). In the end they will betray, deny and abandon him (14:43-6, 50, 66-72). It is tough being a disciple!

An open secret. Jesus offers only four clear parables (4:1-20, 26-29, 30-32; 12:1-12), but parables serve as much to obscure as to reveal (4:11-12). Indeed Jesus commands the demons (1:25, 34; 3:12) and those healed (1:44; 5:34; 7:36; 8:26) to secrecy and uses the mysterious title “Son of Man” to define himself (2:10, 28; 8:31, 38; 9:12, 31; 10:33, 45; 13:26; 14:21, 41). He seeks solitude (1:35; 6:31, 46; 7:24; 8:10; 9:2) and privacy for his healings (5:40; 7:33; 8:23), teaches the disciples in private (4:10-12; 7:17; 9:28; 10:10) and forbids them to pass on what they know (8:30; 9:9). Who then is this powerful and enigmatic man? (cf. 1:27; 4:41; 6:3; 8:27).

The suffering Servant. If Jesus is God’s Messiah (8:29; 14:61; 15:32), he is a Messiah destined to suffer and die (8:31-2; 9:31-2; 10:32-34) “as a ransom for many” (10:45). You must listen to Jesus (4:9; 9:7) and let him open your eyes to see who he really is (8:22-26; 10:46-52), that following his teaching you can follow his “way” (cf. 8:27; 9:33; 10:32) of suffering and self-denial (8:34-38; 9:42-50; 10:23-31, 43-44) and be baptised with his baptism (unto death) (10:38-39). The path leads to the cross! An apt message for a possibly persecuted church (cf. 13:3-37).

Out with the old. The denouement of Jesus’ story takes place in Jerusalem (11:1-11), occasioned by the cleansing of the Temple (11:15-18), interpreted as a judgement on Israel for bearing no fruit (11:12-14, 20-21; cf. 11:17; 12:1-12; and again 4:1-20), presaging its destruction (13:1-2; cf. 12:33). It is this that seals Jesus’ fate, theologically and historically (14:58). Argument with the religious authorities grows, notably around the question of Jesus’ authority and identity (11:27-33; 12:13-17, 18-27, 35-40). Unlike the scribes and Pharisees, the one who loves (12:32-34) and who gives all they have (12:41-44) get it!

The End. If Jesus is the true king come to claim his heritage (11:9, 10), his victory is won through loss. The last days of Jesus’ life and his death receive the greatest attention and have been long in view. Before the high priest Jesus’ identity is finally and fully revealed – as Messiah, Son of God and the glorious Son of Man of Daniel 7:13 (14:61-62; cf. 13:24-27). He is anointed (14:3-9), questioned (15:9, 12), mocked (15:16-20, 32) and crucified (15:26) as a king. The powerful one is “handed over” (14:10, 11, 18, 21, 41, 42, 44; 15:1, 10, 15; cf. 9:31; 10:33) into the power of sinners and to death. Now silent before his accusers (14:61; 15:5), Jesus is betrayed (14:10, 11, 44-45), let down (14:37, 40, 41), abandoned (14:50), denied (14:68, 70, 71), and left in the darkness (15:33), forsaken by God (15:34) – yet mysteriously in line with the will and purpose of God (9:12; 14:21, 36, 49).

But is it the end? At the moment of death, the Temple veil is torn in two (implying access to the Holy) (15:38) and a centurion hails Jesus as Son of God – the first human to do so (15:39; cf. 1:11; 9:7). Laid to rest in a stranger’s tomb (15:40-47), on the first day of the new week that tomb is empty (16:1-4) and an angel tells the women Jesus has been raised (16:5-6) and is “going on ahead of you” (16:7) as he had told them (14:28). The women flee in fear, saying nothing (16:8). Is Jesus alive? Will we meet him? Will we tell others about him? Will the secret be revealed? Will good news come to pass? Or is that not how Mark intended it to finish (see the added (non-Markan) endings).