MOROGORO BIBLE COLLEGE

# Overview of Mark

## Mark as the punchy Gospel

### Breathless feel: ‘immediately’

#### 1:10, 12, 18, 20, 21, 23, 28, 29, 30, 42, 43; 2:8, 12; 3:6; 4:5, 15, 16, 17, 29; 5:2, 29, 30, 42; 6:25, 27, 45, 50, 54; 7:25; 8:10; 9:15, 20, 24; 10:52; 11:2, 3; 14:43, 45, 72; 15:1

## It’s all about Jesus

### Burridge: the Gospels are like ancient biographies; Bond: Mark as biography

#### opening features: title and opening formula 1:1 (echo of Genesis 1:1)

#### Jesus dominates the action

##### remember that 25% of verbs have Jesus as subject, and a further 20% are stories or teaching by Jesus

#### external features—enhance focus on subject

##### structure and style

###### roughly chronological—baptism to passion via Jesus’ ministry (table from Richard Burridge)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Chapters* | *Verses* | *Topic* | *%age of Mark* |
| 1:1-13 | 13 | Preparation and beginnings | 2.0% |
| 1:14–3:6 | 66 | Ministry in Galilee | 9.9% |
| 3:7–6:6 | 119 | Call of disciples and  ministry | 17.9% |
| 6:7–8:26 | 113 | Mission and blindness of disciples | 17.0% |
| 8:27–10:52 | 113 | Journey to Jerusalem | 17.0% |
| 11–13 | 114 | Ministry in Jerusalem | 17.1% |
| 14–16:8 | 127 | Last Supper, Passion and Resurrection | 19.1% |
|  | 665 |  |  |

###### geographical progression from Galilee to Jerusalem 10:1, 32, 46; 11:1, 11

###### content analysis of Mark (Burridge pie chart) 36% on the last week, plus another 17% on the journey to Jerusalem

###### topical material grouped: Mark 4 a group of parables

###### scale: focuses on Jesus

* even when Jesus is not the subject, he is the focus of attention
6:14-16; 14:1-2
* ‘The circle of light is always sharply defined. The description of those who appear in it is limited to the essential.’ Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1960), 25

###### literary units

* various kinds of events and stories—typically in biographies: stories, anecdotes, sayings, speeches

###### characterisation

* ancient characterisation done thorough words and deeds, not through description of physical appearance, health, personality, etc.
* Jesus’ wisdom in outwitting those who ask tricky questions 12:13-34
* Jesus’ power over nature in the two storm-stillings 4:35-41 (note v 41); 6:47-52 (note v 51)
* authority recognised by demons 1:24
* other characters portrayed *in relation to Jesus*
* *the disciples* misunderstanding him 6:52 ‘they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened’
* *the crowd* who gather and seem enthusiastic 2:4, 13; 3:9, 20, 32; 4:1, 36; 5:21, 24, 30-31, 34, 45; 7:14, 17, 33; 8:1-2, 34; 9:14-15, 17, 25; 10:1, 46; 11:18, 32; 12:12, 37
* but a crowd gathers and calls for Jesus’ death 15:8, 11, 14
* *weak-willed Pilate* who caves in under pressure 15:15

###### these features are typical of ancient biography

#### internal features

##### settings are focused around Jesus, e.g. the tables in 11:15

##### topics and content included

###### ancestry alluded to in 6:3

###### great deeds form bulk of ancient biography—Mark includes healings, exorcisms, nature miracles

###### virtues of the subject, Jesus 6:34; 1:41; 12:17

###### Jesus’ death and its consequences

* passion narrative is strong focus, taking up chapters 11–16
* Jesus as king 7x in the passion narrative 15:2, 9, 12, 17-20, 26, 32, 39 (‘son of God’ as imperial title)

##### author’s intention and purpose (whether stated explicitly or not)

###### biographies written with persuasive intent: to commend or criticise values or beliefs of subject

###### Mark is not just commending Jesus’ teaching and actions, but *Jesus himself*

###### so when we preach Mark, we need to preach *Jesus as Mark portrays him*

## How Mark writes

### Markan sandwiches

#### fig tree 11:12-21; also 3:20-25; 4:1-20; 6:7-30; 14:1-11; 14:53-72

#### key point: the two parts are mutually interpretative

### Developing themes

#### echoes, e.g. the two blind men 8:22-26; 10:46-52; also 6:41; 8:6; 14:22

#### sustained notes, e.g. 2:1–3:6; also Mark 7; 4

### Parables

##### sower 4:1-20—Jesus dealing with unresponsive people: note 3:6, 20-22

##### wicked tenants 12:1-12—Jesus as the son coming to the vineyard

#####  ‘The seed of the word is nourished by the blood of the son’ (John Proctor, *Mark’s Jesus,* 16)