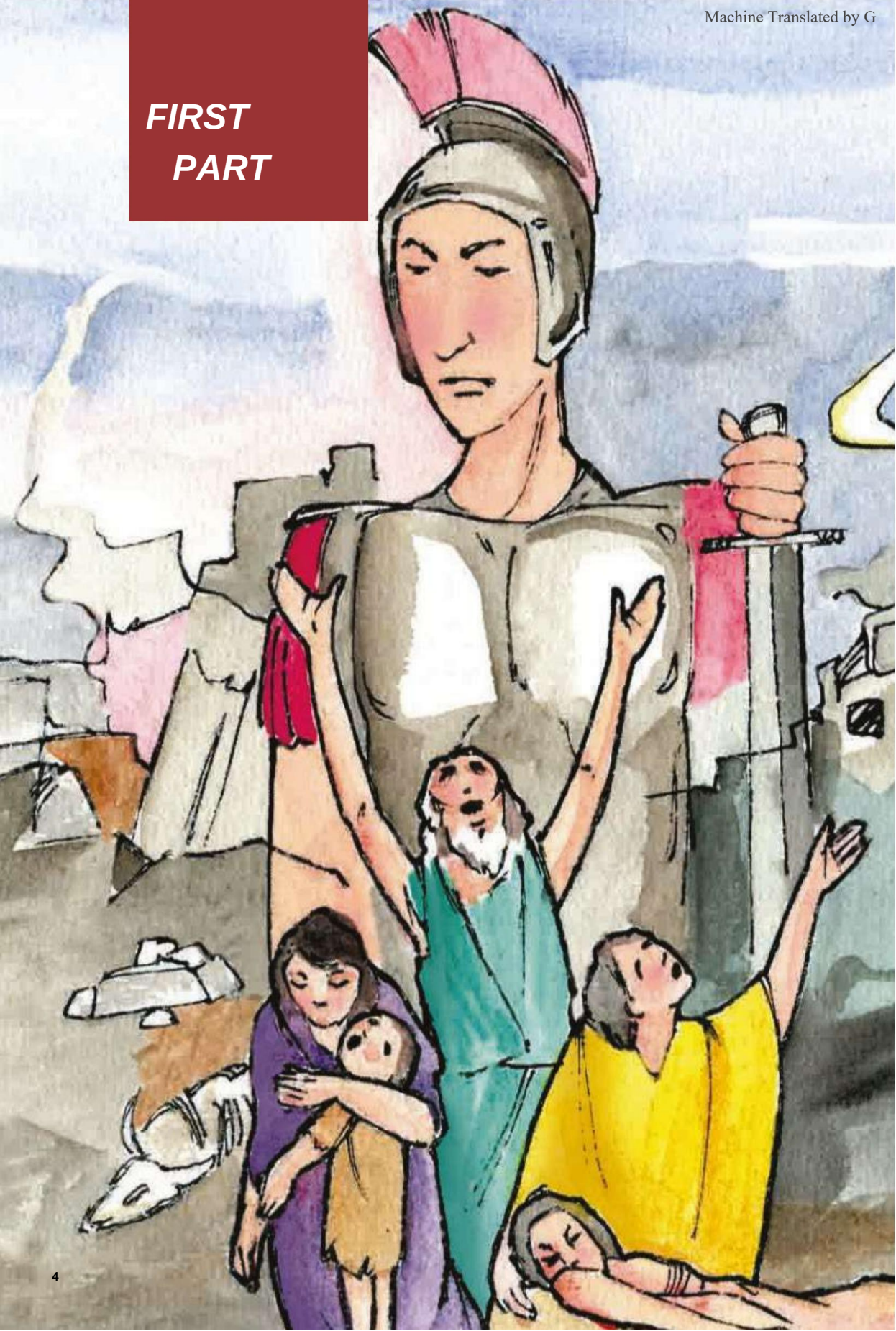
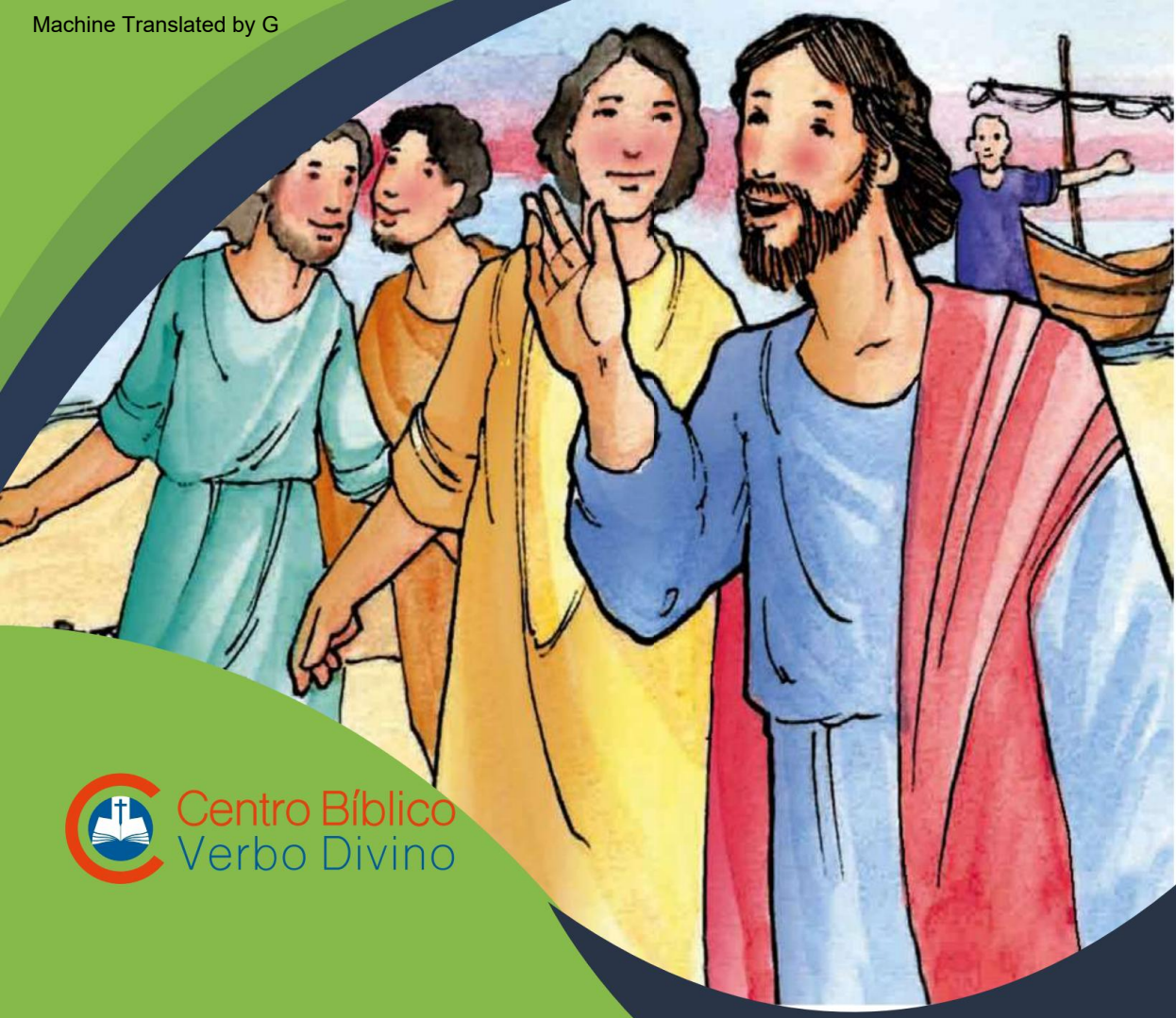
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FIRST PART



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Centro Bíblico Verbo Divino

PRAYERFUL STUDY FROM THE GOSPEL OF MARK

"If anyone wants to follow me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me" (Mark 8:34)

Month of the Bible 99

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GOSPEL STUDY OF MARK

For a long time, the Gospel of Mark was the Cinderella of the Gospels. In the early centuries of Church history, it was considered a summary of Matthew, and for this reason, commentators devoted little attention to it. By the 20th century, however, critical study of the formation of the Gospels revealed its privileged place as the first written Gospel and a possible source for the other two Synoptic Gospels.

Studies on its composition have revealed the unique literary and theological personality of the Gospel of Mark.
From the perspective of these studies, it is possible to delve into the heart of the first Gospel narrative. This has been the approach taken in Latin America by Basic Ecclesial Communities, Lay Movements, and parish groups. It is primarily to all these believers and all pastoral agents that we dedicate this material on the Gospel of Mark.

Our intention is to recover the living face of Jesus Christ, as it was lived and witnessed by the first Christian communities around the Roman Empire, particularly in Rome, the capital, the place where this gospel was probably written, around the years 67-69 AD

Within the Gospel of Mark, as in all the books of the Bible, there is life, people, concrete situations, cries, questions, conflicts. Reading the Bible is engaging in dialogue with a text and a context, striving to listen to daily life, to the new situations that arise each day, in order to discover in them, with greater clarity, the living and effective Word of God that calls us and challenges us.

This material aims to move beyond a fundamentalist reading of the Bible and invites a spiritual, militant, prayerful reading, committed to the poor. It seeks to reveal the mysticism experienced by the first Christian communities, dedicated to following and proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.



Study methodology:

To get the most out of the study text, we recommend: -

Having the Bible on hand to read and compare the information.

- Complete the questionnaire honestly, as it will let us know where we're lacking.
- Write down the questions we have to be answered in the space relevant.
- It is recommended to make brief summaries of each topic to solidify the knowledge.

We cover four topics to learn about Marcos's work:

1. Environment where Marcos's work arises;
2. General data and structure of the work;
3. Continued reading of Marcos's work;
4. Central keys to Marcos's work.

Unit 1

ENVIRONMENT WHERE MARCOS' WORK EMERGES

1. The dominion of the Roman Empire

At a certain point, Christian communities arrived in Rome, the capital of the Empire that dominated all the regions with some geographical, strategic, or economic connection to the Mediterranean Sea. The Romans had built their immense empire thanks to a powerful army, expert in the art of war. This army was organized into legions scattered in strategic locations throughout the Empire. In total, there were some four hundred thousand soldiers who guarded the network of roads that linked Rome with all the subjugated peoples, facilitating the mobilization of the army, the movement of goods, and the collection of taxes.

Rome did not tolerate any people that threatened its dominion. It was ruthless in the face of any attempt at rebellion. Due to its heavy military and bureaucratic expenditures, it found it necessary to expand in order to have more subjugated peoples who would pay war taxes, rates that were very high, causing the impoverishment of the majority and the privilege of the minority in every town and city. Another reason for imperial expansion was the need for manpower for the construction of bridges, ships, roads, aqueducts, monuments, barracks, palaces and cities; also to work in the mines and estates.

These would explain why the Roman Empire undertook the task of conquering as many peoples as possible, paying particular attention to rebellious peoples whom they subjugated and enslaved to guarantee peace and the progress of the projects being carried out in those regions. In Rome alone, half of the million inhabitants were slaves, which meant living as non-persons, without freedom, in total dependence on their masters.

However, it was an imperial rule to respect the traditions and customs of the various subjugated peoples, provided they paid taxes to Rome and did not incite rebellions. If such a rebellion occurred, the repression could be violent and ruthless. For example, in 66 AD, the Roman governor of Palestine ordered the crucifixion of dozens of Jews in Jerusalem; this provoked a rebellion by the Zealots, who expelled the Roman army from the city. The reaction was merciless: 60,000 soldiers besieged the city, and by 70 AD, General Titus, son of Emperor Vespasian, entered Jerusalem in triumph; he sacked the city, killed thousands, and sold the survivors into slavery. Seven hundred young men, chosen from among the strongest, were taken to Rome to participate in Titus's victory parade; afterward, they were either killed or sold into slavery.

2. Rome, the capital of the empire

Rome was a place of violent conflicts between families vying for power. These fights didn't only take place in the palaces, as each family had supporters in the army, among the people, and among the religious orders.

In 54 AD, Nero ascended the throne, thanks to the intrigues of his mother, Agrippina. Nero was a vain, arrogant, and bloodthirsty emperor. To secure his power, he murdered his own mother, a brother, and his wife. In collusion with Pompeia, his second wife, he established a reign of terror, massacring anyone suspected of not sympathizing with him or his methods of governance. Christian communities also suffered the wrath of this bloodthirsty emperor.

To bring order to the finances, Nero confiscated private property and increased taxes. This only worsened the misery of the masses. In "compensation," to cheer up the people, he organized free games and entertainment, and occasionally distributed food to the poor.

In July of the year 64, a great fire broke out in Rome, attributed to Nero himself. To quell the angry reaction of the people, he sought a scapegoat, and this was the Christians, blamed for the fire. The persecution was devastating; many believers were killed. According to tradition, Peter and Paul were martyred there.

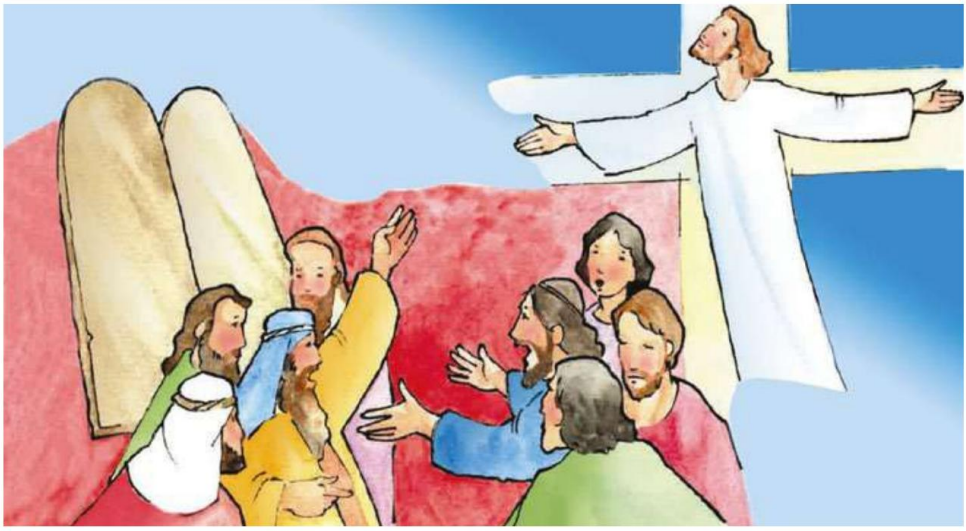
Nero's ambition was so great that several legions even began to rebel against him, shouting "Down with the tyrant!" Nero was declared a public enemy and had to flee. He was finally forced to commit suicide in the year 68. All these events marked the lives of the early Christian communities.

The struggle for succession was violent. In the year 69 alone, there were four emperors. In the end, the one who won the power struggle was General Vespasian, supported by the Eastern legions, which at that time were at war with the Jewish revolt in Jerusalem. Vespasian had to immediately address the finances, ruined by Nero's extravagances and by the high costs of the civil war that had taken place during that year. As a consequence, the impoverishment of the people increased, as tax collection rose.

3. History of the Christian community in Rome

The first steps. Around 40 AD, the Good News of Jesus reached Rome, brought by Jewish Christians. The beginning was simple and without tension. Christians were seen as members of a particular group within the Jewish religion; they therefore enjoyed the privileges that the Empire had granted to this religion, for example, the exemption from worshipping the emperor.

It wasn't easy to establish new relationships, given that this society was marked by the social division between free people and slaves, rich and poor, and men who dominated women. It was an environment of violent and vengeful political power, especially against the impoverished masses. Little by little, communities of 20 to 50 Christians formed, of Jewish and pagan origin; some were slaves and others free; some were merchants, others artisans, and there were even soldi



Romans. This diverse population made coexistence difficult. What united them was their faith in Jesus Christ, the one Lord.

Perhaps that's why the Jews became so prejudiced. They believed that the lifestyle of these Christian communities went against Roman custom, and that this could bring them into trouble with the authorities. Therefore, they gradually distanced themselves, so as not to be mistaken for accomplices. Furthermore, they began to denounce the Christians to the authorities.

For this reason, in 49 AD, Emperor Claudius decided to expel many Christians who had settled in Rome. Among those expelled were Priscilla and Aquila, who had to move to the city of Corinth where they met Paul and stayed with him for a long time (Acts 18:1-3; Rom 16:3-4).

Growth of the communities. The expulsion of the Christians from Rome did not stifle the growth of the communities. On the contrary, they grew and began to organize themselves better. There were communities that met in the houses of Priscilla and Aquila (Rom 16:3-5), Aristobulus (16:10), Narcissus (16:11), Hermas (16:14), and Olympas (16:15). A significant development was the presence of several women who performed important services in the community: the deaconess Phoebe (Rom 16:1), Mary (16:6), Junia the apostle (16:6), Julia, and the sister of Nereus (16:15).

Thanks to the ease of communication between Rome and the rest of the Empire, and the many Christians who passed through the city, the communities began to be known in other places (Rom 1:8; 16:19). Following Jesus had led to a new way of life. But it wasn't all easy, as misunderstandings abounded: suspicions, mistrust, accusations of being clandestine communities, of practicing strange and dangerous rites that threatened the security of the Empire.

Within the communities there were also tensions, caused by brothers of Jewish origin who were still attached to the Law. These brothers were called “Judaizers.” When they learned of Paul’s evangelistic work among the Gentiles in Asia Minor, they did not approve of it and caused a great scandal (Rom 16:17-18), accusing

Paul, a false preacher, contrary to Jewish traditions. It was a great confusion.

The apostle Paul sends a letter. To these accusations, Paul responded with a letter correcting the false interpretations about him and offering advice to the community. He wrote the letter around 57 AD from Corinth. In it, he clearly states that no law, however good it may be, can save, not even the Jewish Law. Only God can save, and He does so freely through Jesus Christ. For this salvation to be effective, he says the condition is to believe in Jesus Christ, become His disciple, and fully engage in the struggle to build the Kingdom of God (Romans 14:17).

Paul also gives advice on dealing with imperial authorities (Rom 13:1-8). The emperor was Nero, whose repression, as we have already seen, was violent against everyone, including Christians. Many wanted to break with his authority and deny its validity. The situation became tense, and opinions were divided. Paul maintains that authority is necessary for the organization of society, but that no authority is absolute. Only God is Lord and Judge. Therefore, all law is relative and cannot be used to oppress; authority is merely an instrument of God for service, for the promotion of justice and righteousness. Only in this sense are Christians called to obey the authorities.

With this, Pablo shows his concern about avoiding a confrontation between Christians and Roman power, something that would have been suicide.

Peter and Paul in the Roman Communities. Paul had always wanted to visit the communities in Rome (Rom 15:22-23), and he did so around the year 61. Although he arrived as a prisoner. He had been arrested in Jerusalem, but he demanded to be taken to Rome to be tried, a right he had as a Roman citizen (Acts 25:10-12; 28:13-16). Paul spent two years in prison, benefiting from special treatment because he was a Roman citizen: living in a house, although always guarded by a soldier and with his right arm in a chain. He tried to support himself by his work, welcoming all who sought him out, preaching to them the Kingdom of God and everything related to the Lord (Acts 28:30-31).

Peter also arrived in Rome, accompanied by Silvanus, a faithful Christian in times of struggle and hardship (1 Peter 5:12). Mark, whom Peter considered a son (1 Peter 5:13), arrived with them. The arrival of the three greatly helped the communities where some two thousand Christians persevered, hundreds of whom had already been tortured and killed. Shortly before his martyrdom, Peter had written a letter that vividly describes the situation. This letter was written to brothers and sisters scattered throughout Asia Minor (1 Peter 1:17); they were migrant Christians who had fled persecution, seeking work or being taken as slaves. Peter urges them to remain steadfast in the expectation of an imminent end. He calls Rome “Babylon,” a symbol of oppression and repression (1 Peter 5:13).

Like Paul, Peter was arrested on the road from Philippi to Ephesus, while visiting the communities of Asia Minor and Greece. The arrest was so swift that he didn't even have time to gather his clothes, his books, and his cloak (2 Tim 4:13).

The death of the two pillars of the Christian faith marked the beginning of a concern to compile writings about Jesus that were already circulating within the communities. To this end, they

He drew upon the testimony and preaching of Peter and Mark, whose memoirs were compiled into a book, in order to respond to present challenges.

4. The situation of the communities at the time the book was written

To better understand the book's authorship, we must delve deeper into the problems the communities faced, as this Gospel reflects the existing situation. Within the communities, there were events and people who offered hope—signs that pointed to the Kingdom! Faithfulness to following Jesus shaped the lives of the brothers and sisters; defending the poor fueled their journey. But there were also tensions, conflicts, and ambiguities…

External conflicts. In Rome, noble families held sway thanks to their connections with the imperial court. They exploited the poor and slaves, forcing them to live in submission. The community wondered: what would Jesus' attitude be? Which side would he take? The apostles had recounted Jesus' actions on this subject: he never sympathized with rulers, nor did he sit at the table with oppressors (Mark 6:14-19); he never entered their palaces. The only time he entered a palace, it was by force, to be tried and condemned to death (Mark 15:1-3). Jesus made no alliances with Herod, Pilate, the scribes, or the chief priests. On the contrary, he was harsh with them (Mark 12:38-40).
On one occasion, he accused them of being abusive and proposed that he take the opportunity to say that he had not come to be served, but to serve, and not just any service, but one capable of rescuing people's lives and freedom (Mark 10:42-45). Jesus' words motivated the community not to compromise with abusive authorities.

As the communities sought to be faithful to Jesus, misunderstandings became more frequent. It was truly difficult to be a disciple of Jesus without the risk of persecution. What to do? Flee? Compromise the oppressor? Risk one's life? Expel those brothers who were not steadfast? Jesus was remembered as having been threatened from the beginning (Mark 3:6), harassed by the Jewish leaders (12:12; 14:1-2). But Jesus always maintained the courage and firmness to confront them (11:27-33), and at the same time, he always maintained mercy for those who erred (14:25-31).

The communities recalled a pivotal event in the life of Jesus: the multiplication of the loaves. While Herod and the powerful of Galilee were feasting and murdering people like John the Baptist (Mark 6:14-29), Jesus was in the midst of his hungry, abandoned people, like sheep without a shepherd. Those who should have been shepherds were executioners; on the contrary, Jesus, seeing the hungry multitude, decided to multiply the loaves, always with the help of the people. It was the miracle of sharing. That action of Jesus was a denunciation of the accumulation of wealth by the minority. The problem of hunger had to be solved on the basis of sharing (Mark 6:34-44).

But the apostles had difficulty understanding this, because they were still bound to the idea of profit and accumulation (Mark 6:52). It was necessary for Jesus to draw their attention to it: “Beware of the ideology of the Pharisees and Herod. Try to understand the meaning of the multiplication of the loaves” (8:14-21).

On the other hand, Rome was a large city, with people of every race and religion. The Christian community was a minority, despised even by their Jewish brethren. These, in turn, felt contempt for pagans, something that many Jewish Christians echoed, at the risk of closing themselves off to pagans. What to do? Stop bringing the Good News to the pagans? Remain only with the Jews? Then they remembered that Jesus began his evangelization in Galilee, a land considered pagan (Mark 1:14), performed miracles in pagan lands (5:1-20; 8:1-9), and even on one occasion allowed himself to be questioned by a pagan woman (7:24-30). Therefore, there should be no barriers or prejudices against pagans.

The situation in Rome was so harsh for the poor and marginalized that everything seemed dominated by the forces of evil. There was hatred, revenge, and death. What attitude should one take in the face of these forces of evil? Peter and other missionaries had spoken of Jesus' struggle against the demons and unclean spirits that invaded even the synagogues (Mark 1:23-28). For Jesus, demons were forces of evil that prevented people from being free, so he did not remain silent in the face of them, but cast them out (1:32-34; 5:6-10; 7:29-30; 9:25-27). In the struggle against Satan, Jesus was victorious from the beginning (1:13). When he chose some disciples to send on a mission, he asked them to cast out demons (Mk 6:7-13), that is, to fight against the evil that harms the lives of people and communities, and they were to do so with prayer and union with the Father (9:29).

Internal conflicts. The arrogance and overbearing power of the forces of evil seemed to crush the communities and break the resistance of the poor. Many wondered if the communities had a future, if they could survive in these circumstances. Where were Jesus' promises? Had he forgotten them?

Since many were discouraged and lost, it was good to recall events and sayings of Jesus that the apostles and other believers had recounted. For example, the boat trip across the Sea of Galilee with Jesus and some of his disciples. Jesus, tired, fell asleep. Suddenly, a storm arose so violent that the boat seemed about to sink. The disciples, very frightened, woke Jesus so that he could help them. Jesus calmed the storm and then rebuked his disciples for their fear and lack of faith (Mark 4:35-41). In times of persecution, they were able to understand the meaning of that event. The sea was a symbol of the evil of the Empire, and the presence of Jesus was the confidence the community needed to face the devastating fury of evil.

At other times they recalled the parable of the farmer who sowed seeds and went home peacefully. The seed began to sprout and grow, without needing the farmer's presence (Mark 4:26-29); or they recalled the parable of the tiny seed planted near the house to produce mustard for food; in time it becomes a large tree, capable of sheltering many birds' nests (4:30-32).

These comparisons arose at specific moments within the communities.
It was Jesus teaching us not to be overcome by anxiety and to steadfastly follow the path of the Kingdom, a reality that is always growing, with God's guarantee. That is why the death of many Christians served as a testimony that encouraged the communities.

But some succumbed to discouragement: who will replace the dead brothers? Who will have as much courage as they did? There was a certain reluctance to assume leadership roles. Then they remembered that Peter had been

called “Satan” for not accepting the cross of Jesus (Mk 8:33) or the night in Gethsemane, when no one was able to be near Jesus in the most decisive moments (14:37), but they ran away and denied the Master (14:50, 66-72).

These experiences led them to recognize their weakness and try to assume leadership roles. After all, serving the community was a matter of discipleship and faithfulness in the midst of persecution. Jesus himself had begun his public ministry by proclaiming the Kingdom of God shortly after the arrest and death of John the Baptist (Mark 1:14); at the height of the crisis, he made the decision to go to Jerusalem, even knowing he would be killed (8:31; 14:43-46). And what impressed them most was that Jesus remained steadfast (14:60; 15:1-5). Jesus' silence was not the silence of the defeated, but of someone free and conscious; a silence that denounced cowardice and lies: “No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, nor does new wine put into old wineskins” (2:21-22).

Another issue that created tension in the communities was the presence of women in leadership positions. In pagan and Jewish society, women had little influence. They were only considered suitable for raising children or caring for men. Their voices were not heard, and they served as witnesses for nothing.

But, in the communities, people wanted to experience the newness of Jesus' gospel. That's why some women took on important roles: apostles like Junia (Rom 16:6) or deaconesses like Phoebe (Rom 16:1). But not everyone accepted this. The experience of the past still marked them. There was mistrust, suspicion, and even slander. Some thought that the women of the community should be treated as they were in Roman and Jewish society. This led to arguments.

Christian women courageously defended relationships of equality and dignity. There was no shortage of brothers who supported their cause, enlightened by the teachings and practices of Jesus, who placed great value on women, especially marginalized ones: he healed Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1:29-31), a woman considered unclean because of her illness (5:25-34); he allowed himself to be questioned by a pagan woman (7:24-30); he valued the offering of a poor widow and used it as an example to expose the greed of the rich (12:41-44); many became disciples of Jesus. Many brothers in the community were deeply affected to learn that at the time of the Passion, only these women had the courage to accompany Jesus (15:40-41; 15:47). And for this reason, they were the first witnesses of the resurrection (16:1-11). The participation of women helped to denounce the prejudices and contempt against them.

All these external and internal conflicts prove that the formation of the communities was not easy. Jesus had not left them any written law. They had to create a way of life to remain faithful to Jesus in the specific situations they experienced. This demanded close attention to their reality and great fidelity to the Lord.

To organize all these experiences, illuminated by the Master's practice, many brothers and sisters dedicated themselves to carefully selecting the events, considering what might encourage the brothers and sisters. When they began to gather this material, other concerns arose, for example, the opinions expressed about Jesus, many of which bore no resemblance to those taught by the witnesses of Jesus.

Some said that Jesus was the Son of God; others that he was Almighty. Some proclaimed his glorious return, like Roman generals after their victories. All were partial and diminished portrayals of Jesus. Who was Jesus?
What was your project? What can you say to communities that suffer persecution?

Some pamphlets. The Gospel of Mark didn't spring from nothing. It wasn't the work of a single person or community, but rather it emerged gradually, piece by piece, from memories of the life of Jesus Christ. The conflicts and challenges that arose along the way prompted reflections and searches for meaning, always in the light of Jesus and his evangelizing practice.

As a result, small pamphlets began to emerge to share the life of Jesus. These pamphlets were a helpful resource for the communities.
They were not the product of a single group, nor were they created all at once. Many collaborated in their composition: men and women, the wise and the ignorant, Jews and Greeks. All shared the same concern: to seek inspiration, light, and alternatives in the life and teachings of Jesus. When several pamphlets were compiled, more elaborate commentaries were written. Some gathered sayings of Jesus; others, actions; others, miracles; others, accounts of the Passion. The ultimate goal was not to record literally what Jesus said or did, but to seek in his life and practice light for the journey of the communities.

Examples of pamphlets. In the beginning, when pagans asked to join the community, they faced serious problems, since the Jewish-Christian brothers wanted the new believers to practice Jewish Law (circumcision, customs, rites). What to do? What had been Jesus' attitude in similar cases? Some recalled his clashes with the Pharisees and teachers of the law: “You hypocrites! You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to observe your own traditions… You nullify the word of God by your tradition that you hand down. And you do many things like this” (Mark 7:6-13).

In Rome, given the indifference of the authorities, food was scarce. The people, driven by hunger, resorted to looting the markets; this provoked repression from the authorities. It was then that someone recalled Jesus' attitude when he supported his disciples who were picking grain on the Sabbath to appease their hunger: "Life is more important than any law" (Mark 2:27).

Many young people who wanted to join the communities clashed with their parents, who absolutely refused, saying it was dangerous. What to do? What to say? Someone recalled Jesus' words: “Who is my mother? Who are my brothers? Whoever does the will of my Father is my brother and sister and mother” (Mark 3:33-35).

Although there were wealthy believers in the communities, the majority were poor. While everyone was drawn to Jesus' message, their differences created tension. What to do? Someone recalled Jesus' encounter with the rich man who kept the Law; he invited him to share his possessions, but the man refused. Saddened, Jesus declared that whoever does not share their possessions cannot be a disciple, nor enter the Kingdom of God (Mark 10:17-31).

These and other sayings and deeds of Jesus illuminated the path of the first communities. So that they would not be forgotten, someone dedicated themselves to writing down these memories in

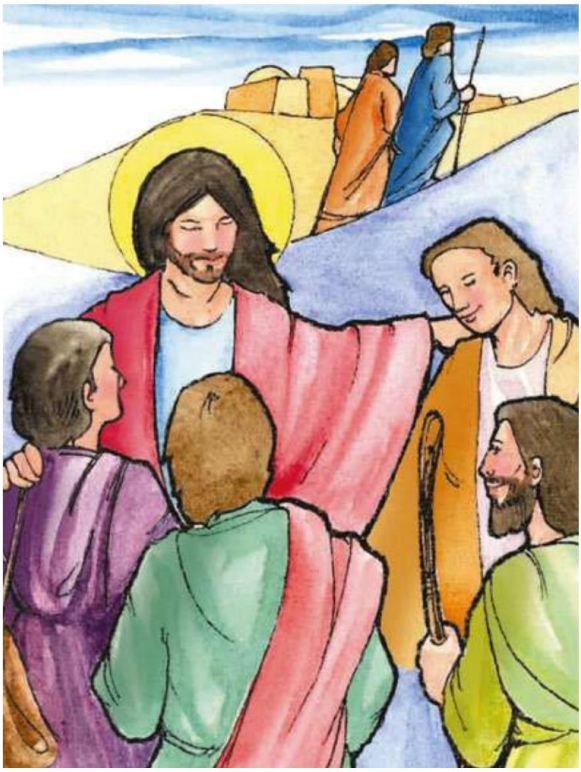
pamphlets that circulated in the communities and guided the moments of discernment and decision-making.

Around 68-70 AD, the situation in Rome and the state of the Christian communities was very difficult. There was a perceived need to clarify the consequences of fidelity to Jesus Christ. Thus arose the idea of conducting a detailed evaluation of the community's journey and compiling all the pamphlets circulating within the communities, in order to delve deeper into the life of Jesus. Mark was certainly part of this group, and his presence was significant, given his experience with Paul and Peter (Mark 14:51-52; Acts 12:12; Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11).

Unit 2

GENERAL DATA AND STRUCTURE OF THE WORK

Introduction



Mark was the creator of the literary genre called the "gospel." He had the brilliant idea of compiling into a continuous narrative the traditions about the words and actions of Jesus that were circulating among the Christian communities. To do this, he had to select and organize various traditions. This task was greatly influenced by the situation of the Christian community to whom he addressed his work at that time.

Since they don't know each other Given the sources he used, it is difficult to define precisely what is original to Mark and what he borrowed from other sources. A study of his style helps us discover Mark's writing style. By contrast, we can identify older materials, including sections that Mark found already grouped together. For example, the Passion narrative, the loaves section, the controversies with the Pharisees, and so on. With these materials, Mark manages to compose an original work, with its own distinct personality and internal coherence, which can be read on its own merits.

1. The Style Proposed by Mark The

Gospel of Mark has a distinctive style, revealing an agile personality, especially gifted for narration. Although its intended audience was not Jewish Christians, the work clearly has a Semitic background, with the popular style characteristic of oral tradition. Thus, for example, there is a

Excessive use of the conjunction “and”, typical of Semitic oral style (a repetition that, however, is avoided in translations. See Mark 1:21-45) or the many Aramaic terms that Mark uses: Boanerges (3:17); Talitha cum (5:4). Other examples can be seen in 7:34; 10:46; 14:36 and 15:34.

On the other hand, the narrative artistry is most evident in its concrete realism, its schematic style, and its vividness. Mark uses colloquial words that were later corrected by Matthew and Luke. For example, krabaton (stretcher: Mark 2:12). In this sense, Mark uses a variety of terms to name concrete realities; sometimes he recalls details that seem inconsequential, for example, in 5:42, at the end of the healing of Jairus's daughter, he reports that the girl was twelve years old.

Mark uses the same literary structure for diverse narratives. If we compare the account of the calming of the storm (4:39-41) with the account of an exorcism (1:25-27), we notice that the structure, and even the words (“be quiet!”), are the same. Along these lines, the vividness that Mark achieves by mixing verb tenses and using the historical present makes the readers participants in what is being narrated.

Other literary devices used by Mark are summaries and triptychs. Summaries are brief summaries of Jesus' activity that Mark introduces to provoke reflection within his narrative (1:14-15; 3:7-12, etc.). A triptych is the insertion of a story within others of similar content. With this device, Mark creates suspense, leaving the reader intrigued and awaiting the outcome of the first story. We have an example of this technique in 5:21-43:



2. Division of the work

It is clear that Marcos organizes his material in a specific way. If we are able to read his work using the same framework he employs, we will be able to grasp its richness. What is this framework? What criteria did he use to organize the material? Several divisions of the work have been proposed, which are not mutually exclusive but rather complementary.

Chronological scheme. This division is based on the temporal succession. The organization of the material corresponds to the sequence of events in Jesus' life found in the summaries given in the Christian proclamation, for example, in the Acts of the Apostles (10:37-41). The proposal is suggestive, but the existence of a "traditional scheme" or the insertion of diverse materials into such a scheme cannot be demonstrated.

Geographical outline. A reading of the work reveals that Marcos dispo- the events according to a geographical sequence:

Galilee – Surroundings of Galilee – Trip to Jerusalem – Jerusalem.

It is evident that Mark creates this itinerary with profound theological meaning, concentrating Jesus' activity in Galilee, the land of the Gentiles (1:9, 14, 39). There his eschatological revelation takes place, and from there the mission to the Gentiles begins, with the Risen Lord at its head (14:28; 16:7). On the other side is Jerusalem, the place where Jesus' opponents live (3:22; 7:1; 10:33; 11:18). The "journey to Jerusalem" divides the story of Jesus between Galilee and Jerusalem. This symbolic vision of space is important for understanding Mark's Gospel, but it cannot be used to deduce a division of the book. More than an organizational criterion, it is a thematic thread that runs through the work, attempting to explain the meaning of Jesus' mission and to justify preaching to the "Gentiles."

Christological Framework. The starting point for this division is the break that occurs between 8:26 and 8:27. Although there are occasional indications of who Jesus is before 8:26, it is in the second part that the question of who Jesus is is clearly answered. This concentration of Christological and soteriological material is certainly a construction of Mark. The key lies in the question of the “messianic secret,” which we will discuss later. In the first part (1:1–8:26), there is a veiled presentation of Jesus; although his actions provoke a certain response regarding his identity, this is not accepted by Jesus, who imposes silence on those who want to reveal his identity. The division based on Christological criteria is appropriate, since the presentation of Jesus is the “backbone” of the entire Gospel.

But it is not enough, and it must be complemented with literary criteria that give the work greater unity and reveal to us the dramatic construction of the work.

Literary-theological outline. The theological criteria practically coincide with what was said in the previous section. In the first part, the progressive revelation of his identity is evident, as an answer to the question: Who is Jesus? His revelation is made in secret until reaching 8:30. At that moment, Jesus speaks to his disciples and explains to them the mystery of the Son of Man, something that will culminate in his Passion in Jerusalem.

In the first part, three summaries reflect the progression of Jesus' activity (1:14-15; 3:7-12; 6:6b). Each summary is followed by a pericope concerning the disciples (1:16-20; 3:13-19; and 6:7-13). The summary and the pericope about the disciples mark the beginning of three sections that conclude with the reactions of: 1. The Pharisees (3:5-6); 2. His own followers (6:1-6a); 3. The disciples (8:17-21). The reaction is always the same: blindness of heart. This pattern is repeated three times, resulting in a tripartite division of the first part.

Summary	Disciples	Reaction	Sections
1,14-15	1,16-20	3,5-6	1,14-3, 6
3,7-12	3,13-19	6.1-6a	3,7-6, 6a
6.6b	6,7-13	8,17-21	6.6b-8.21

Similar procedures are used in the second part. There are three sections, each constructed in a distinctive way: the journey of the Son of Man (8:31–10:52); Revelation in Jerusalem (11:1–13:56); and Passion and Resurrection (14:1–16:8). In the first part, the threefold repetition of the same scheme is observed.

and.

Passion Advertisement	Incomprehension	Instruction
8,31	8,32-33	8,34ss
9,30-31	9,32	9.35ss
10,32-34	10,35-40	10,41ss

This second part is organized around three journeys that Jesus makes from Bethany to Jerusalem: Bethany-Jerusalem (Inspection of the temple: 11,1-11); Bethany-Jerusalem (Purification of the temple: 11,12-19); Bethany-Jerusalem (Discussion in the temple and eschatological discourse: 11, 20-13,36).

Finally, there is the Passion-Resurrection narrative, which was already a unified whole before being incorporated into the Gospel, and which Mark places at the end of his work as its culmination and as the key to understanding everything that has come before. This division, based on literary criteria, better reflects the overall structure of the Gospel. Furthermore, it highlights the drama unfolding between Jesus, his followers, the people, and his adversaries.

SUMMARY DIVISION OF THE WORK

<table>
<tr><th>Division
Chronological
(Hch 10,37-41)</th><th>Division
Geographic</th><th>Division
Christological</th><th>Literary division-
theological</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">1,1-8: Juan Bautista

1,9-13,37: Jesus, anointed by the Holy Spirit, goes about doing good.</td><td>1,1-13: in the Jordan

1,14-9,50: Capernaum
1,16-3,35:

By the lake (4-5)

Nazareth and surroundings (6:1-13)
Lake (6.30-7.23)
Jewish and pagan territory (7,24-9,29)
Galilee, and Capernaum (9:30-50)</td><td rowspan="2">1,1-13: A voice from heaven cries out "My son"

1:14-8:26: Jesus announces with words and deeds show the nearness of the Kingdom.

Silence to the demons (1, 14-6, 6a)
Opinions about Jesus (6,6b-8,26)</td><td>1,1-13: Jesus and John the Baptist</td></tr>
<tr><td>1:14-3:6: Jesus and his disciples facing the people and their adversaries

3:7-6:6a: Jesus with their disciples</td></tr>
<tr><td>10.1-52: Journey</td><td>8,27-16,8: Peter: You are the Messiah. Voice from heaven: “This is my beloved Son.”
Jesus announces his passion (8:27-10:52).
The Son of David in Jerusalem (11-13).

Jesus declares himself the Son of God before the Sanhedrin.
A pagan confesses: “This man was the Son of God.”</td><td>6,6b-8,26: Jesus reveals himself to his disciples</td></tr>
<tr><td>14,1-15,47: Death of Jesus</td><td>11,1-16,8: Jesus' ministry and passion in Jerusalem</td><td rowspan="2">11:1-13:37: Revelation in Jerusalem. Definitive break.</td></tr>
<tr><td>16:1-8: Resurrection.</td><td>Announcement of the meeting in Galilee. Follow the mission.</td><td>14:1-16:8: Culmination of the mystery. Passion and resurrection of the Son of Man.</td></tr>
</table>

The first part presents the enigma of the person of Jesus. His revelation is shrouded in mystery. In the healings, everyone recognizes him, but their reactions are triumphalist and insincere; that is, they experience incomprehension and a lack of faith. First, it is the Pharisees who close their hearts to Jesus (3:5-6). Then it is "his own," to whom he proclaims the Kingdom through parables, who react with a lack of faith (6:1-6a). Finally, it is his disciples, to whom he reveals the Kingdom of God (4:11), who react with incomprehension (8:17-21).

The summary of the first part is found in the transition. The episode of Peter's confession (8:27-30) reflects the contradiction: he confesses Jesus as the Messiah, but he does not understand the full implications of that title. Further instruction on the destiny of the Son of Man is necessary for the disciples to understand. This instruction is found in the passages of the blind man of Bethsaida (8:22-26) and the blind man Bartimaeus (10:46ff).

The transition, therefore, functions as a hook between the two sections: it opens a and closes another one, through two key episodes for understanding the gospel.

The second part begins with "the way," where Jesus instructs his disciples about his death. This serves as a guiding thread for the three announcements of the Passion and the disciples' subsequent misunderstanding. Jesus dedicates himself to instructing them. In the second section, the revelation of the Son of Man takes place in Jerusalem. Through discussions, teachings, and symbolic actions, Jesus manifests his identity. In his death, the true messianic nature of Jesus is revealed. The paradox reaches its climax, and the mystery invites surrender into his arms.

3. Generalities of the work

Author. This work has long been known as the “Gospel according to Mark,” attributing its authorship to a disciple named John Mark. This figure is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles (12:12, 25; 13:13; 15:37, 39), Colossians (4:10), Philemon (24), and 1 Peter (5:13). Although Mark's authorship is not entirely certain, there are no strong reasons to deny it. We actually have no direct evidence from the Gospel itself to identify the author. The author's name does not appear in the original text, so, strictly speaking, Mark is an anonymous work.

But is it necessary to know the author of the gospel? We believe not.
What is important is that the work was received by the Church as a testimony, thanks to the authority given by the apostles. However, to establish more precisely the date and place where the Gospel of Mark was written, and to know its intended audience and the reason why the author wrote his work, it is necessary to examine the possible author.

According to tradition, this Gospel was written by an interpreter of Peter's preaching, named John Mark, a young Jewish convert, the son of Mary, in whose house the community used to meet (Acts 12:2). Mark accompanied Barnabas and Paul on the mission to Antioch (Acts 12:25), and afterwards continued to accompany Barnabas in his missionary work (Acts 13:5, 13; 15:37). From other sources, we know that he accompanied Paul to Rome during his imprisonment (Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 10).

24), as to Peter (1 Peter 5:13). Many testimonies and extra-canonical documents point in this direction.

In the fourth century, Eusebius of Caesarea, citing the testimony of Papias, bishop of Hierapolis (110 AD) and disciple of John the Elder, attributed the authorship of the Gospel to John Mark. In 180 AD, Irenaeus of Lyons repeated Papias's statement, adding that the Gospel was written after the deaths of Peter and Paul. Church Fathers such as Tertullian, Origen, and Jerome identified Mark, a disciple of Peter and Paul, as the author of this Gospel. According to Jerome (fourth century), Mark founded the church of Alexandria; he served as bishop there and was martyred in 68 AD, dragged through the streets of the city and then burned.

It is therefore reasonable to assume the widespread opinion that this gospel dates back to John Mark. However, many commentators agree that there was more than one redactor, most likely second-generation Christians, who carried John Mark's initial work to its final form.

Recipients. Tradition identifies the intended audience as converted pagans living in Rome during the reign of Nero (64 AD). Certain clues in the text suggest that this was a poor community, eager to give an account of their faith, just as Jesus had done, even unto death on the cross. This community was going through a period of crisis due to the persecutions they suffered. Many doubts arose. Faced with this situation, Mark invites the community to live a faith committed to Jesus, poor and liberating (11:1-12), suffering servant (8:31), Son of God (15:39), crucified and risen (16:6). In times of persecution and martyrdom (13:9-10), Mark frames the following of Jesus in terms of the cross (8:34-38; 15:40-41). Disciple and cross are inseparable (8:27-

10:52). In the midst of the conflict, Mark proclaims a future of hope, because the crucified one is alive (16:6).

Despite these clues gleaned from the text itself, we cannot be certain of the community's geographical location. There are two hypotheses: Galilee or Rome. The most widely accepted one suggests that Mark's community originated in Galilee, since that region features prominently in the text. In Galilee, a region considered pagan and therefore despised, Jesus begins to proclaim the Kingdom of God (1:14-15).
15); there he begins his journey to Jerusalem (16:7); from there the Good News spreads to the whole world (16:15). Other authors point to Rome and its surroundings, using the following criteria:

Only Mark speaks of Simon of Cyrene, and says that he is the father of Rufus (15:21), a person who seems to be of great interest to the readers (Cf. Rom 16:13).

Although the Gospel was written in Greek , it uses Latin terms (6:27; 12:42; 14:65; 15:15-16, 39, 44-45). In 5:9, 15, the unclean spirit is called “legion,” an important word in Roman military jargon. Interestingly, when Mark uses Latin terms, he never explains them, presumably because his readers were already familiar with them.

However , when he uses Hebrew terms, which were surely unfamiliar to his readers, he sees the need to explain them (3:17; 5:41; 10:46; 15:34). In that sense, he explains that Gehenna is hell (9:43-44). Also

He feels the need to explain some Jewish customs such as washing one's hands (7,3), the meaning of Passover (14,1-12) or the meaning of the Sabbath vigil (15,42).

There are extra-canonical testimonies that point to Rome as the place where a gospel was first circulated.

LATIN WORDS	ARAMAIC WORDS
Modius = basket, cup (4,21).	Boanerges (Sons of Thunder: 3,17).
Herba = shoot, stem (4,28).	Beelzebub (Demon: 3,22).
Legio = legion (5,9.15).	Talitha with (Rise: 5,41).
Speculator = soldier, executioner (6,27).	Corban (Tribute: 7,11)
Denarius = Denarius (6.37; 12.15; 14.5).	Epheta (to open: 7,34).
Sextarius = jar, pitcher (7.4).	Rabbi (Teacher: 9,5; 11,21; 14,45).
Census = census tax (12,14).	Bartimaeus (son of Timaeus: 10.46).
Quadrans = small coin (12.42).	Rabbuni (Teacher: 10,51).
Fragello = to flagellate, to whip (15,15).	Hosanna (11,9-10).
Praetorium = seat of the governor (15,16)	Abba (Father: 14,36).
centurio = centurión (15,39.44.45).	Golgotha (place of a skull: 15,22).
	Eloi lema sabachthani (My God, why have you forsaken me?: 15,34).

Date of composition. According to tradition, Mark wrote his Gospel after the death of Peter (64 AD). This is considered reliable, as clues within the Gospel itself indicate that the work was completed before the destruction of Jerusalem (70 AD), a consequence of the Jewish War. Many biblical scholars suggest a probable date of composition between 65 and 69 AD, a period marked by the persecution under Nero (64 AD) and the destruction of the Temple (70 AD), events that profoundly impacted both the Jewish people and the nascent Christian communities.

Therefore, we can conclude that Mark was the first Gospel to be redrafted. Its political, economic, and social backdrop was Roman rule, and it was likely addressed to Christians living in or around the capital of the empire.

Structure of the Gospel of Mark

Introduction:

John the Baptist and Jesus (1:1-14)
Beginning of Jesus' preaching (1,15).

Ministry Start:

Jesus heals, preaches and teaches in Galilee and other places (1,16-6,6).
Jesus encounters opposition (6.7-8:21).
Central section: Jesus and his disciples on the “way” to Jerusalem (8:22-10:52).

Ministry conclusion:

Jesus confronts the authorities of Jerusalem (11:1-13:37).
The Passion: dinner, arrest, trial, crucifixion, death, burial (14,1-15,47).
Conclusion: The women find the tomb empty (16:1-8; vv. 9-20 were not in the original; they were added later).

MATERIAL FOUND ONLY IN MARCOS

1.1: Introductory verse.
3,19b-21: Jesus' family tries to stop him.
4,26-29: The parable of the seed growing of itself.
7:31-37: Jesus heals a deaf man in the Decapolis.
8:22-26: Jesus gives sight to a blind man in Bethsaida.
14:51-52: A young man escapes naked after the arrest of Jesus.

16:14-18: The sending of the eleven to preach.

4. Jesus in the Gospel of Mark

The central theme of this Gospel is Jesus of Nazareth and the reaction he provoked among his people. Mark writes his Gospel in light of the resurrection, but he doesn't dwell on this mystery of faith. On the contrary, he emphasizes presenting Jesus, the crucified one, and the unbelieving people who reject him.

At the outset of his work, Mark declares Jesus “the Christ, the Son of God”; his life is “Good News” (1:1). Throughout the work, this confession will be ratified by God the Father (1:11), the Holy Spirit (1:12), and even by Satan (1:13).

It is this Jesus who begins to announce the imminent arrival of the Kingdom of God. But his announcement provokes a strong confrontation: neither his family understands it (3:21), nor his people (6:1-6), nor his disciples (4:41; 6:51-52). The Pharisees and Herodians, for their part, decide to eliminate him (3:6). While a few pagans recognize his power (5:18-20; 7:24-30), his disciples are blind and do not understand the Passion. Jesus, who heals the blind (8:22-26), is unable to heal them.

In this gospel, Jesus does not make it easy to understand his person, but rather reveals his power on the condition that no one is told (the messianic secret).

(co). Although Jesus distances himself from his followers, he is always mindful of them; he reveals his glory to his disciples in the Transfiguration, but commands them to be silent until the moment of his resurrection. With all this, Mark evokes a perplexing figure for readers who are already perplexed.

The followers of Jesus. Alongside the mystery of Jesus' identity, Mark develops the condition of the disciples. In the foreground of the narrative appears the relationship between Jesus and his disciples; a kind of progressive catechesis. They are always together, for he chose them "to live with him" (3:14).
He does everything in their presence. The disciples are symbols of the recipients of the gospel!

In the first part (1:1–8:30), Jesus dismantles the disciples' preconceived notions about God and the Messiah. The task is arduous because they do not understand his parables (4:13); they are afraid of him (4:41); they do not comprehend his miracles (6:52; 7:37). It seems as if his instructions fall on deaf ears (8:17–21).

The healing of the blind man of Bethsaida (8:22-26) introduces the beginning of the healing of the disciples' blindness, a reality dramatized in Peter's confession (8:27-30). The blind man and Peter occupy the center of the Gospel. From there, Jesus' catechesis focuses on the suffering condition of the Messiah, on the cross that all disciples who wish to follow him must bear (8:34). Three times Jesus announces his Passion, and although they do not fully understand it, the path is now clear for his death on the cross to be the moment in which the mystery of his messianic identity is definitively revealed.

Thus Mark arrives at the climax of his narrative: “Truly this man was the Son of God” (15:39). This confession is the response to the Father’s voice at the beginning of the Gospel: “You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (1:11). The centurion represents believers of pagan origin, who attain faith through the cross. But he also represents people of all times, whom Jesus encounters to invite them to recognize him as the Son of God and Savior in situations of death and despair.

Unit 3

CONTINUED READING OF THE WORK OF MARK

Introduction

All the Gospels are texts that share a common narrative thread, with characters and literary devices that attempt to present the figure of Jesus. The Gospels are narratives, not biographies; theological narratives, that is, confessions of faith from the first Christian communities about what they discovered in Jesus as a testament to God's love and the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises.

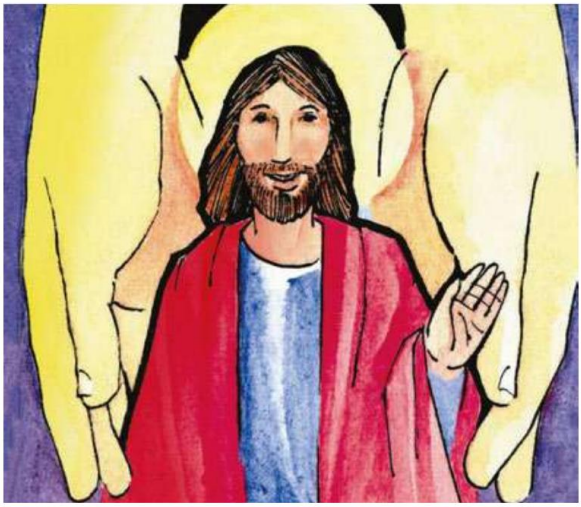
Mark, more than a narrator and interpreter of the traditions of Peter and Paul, is a creative popular theologian. His theological creativity is evident in his narrative, as he strives to detail scenes where Jesus appears (1:13, 33; 2:1-2; 4:36-38; 6:56; 8:2-3, 14; 9:36; 10:32, 50, etc.). His style is simple yet profound, permeated by two central themes in his Gospel: denunciation and proclamation. Within these themes, he frames his theological vision of Jesus' ministry.

Mark is not concerned with the manner of Jesus' birth, and says little about his resurrection. Mark's Jesus is dynamic, he moves people, he is so human that he gets tired (6:31), angry (1:41; 3:5), moving (1:41; 6:34; 10:47), impatient (9:19), hungry (6:31), sleepy (4:38). However, from the beginning his divinity is affirmed, which is precisely revealed in his full humanity (1:1; 3:11; 5:7; 9:7; 13:33; 14:61; 15:39).

Mark confronts the theological and social deviations of his time with the message of Jesus: he condemns Pharisaic legalism as a model of religious domination (8:15) and Herod as an example of the corrupt ruler of all time (6:14-29). In contrast, Mark shows himself to be more favorable to foreigners than to Jews, including the religious authorities, whom he harshly criticizes. Thus, the beneficiaries of the Kingdom of God are the marginalized: women (15:1-8), prostitutes (14:3-9), widows (12:41-44), children (5:21-23; 10:13-16), the sick (1:29-34; 2:1-12; 6:53-56), lepers (1:40), the hungry (6:30-44), and foreigners (7:24-37).

Finally, for Mark, the Kingdom of God must be received with childlike simplicity (10:14-15) and a spirit of service. That is why Jesus' hands stand out in Mark! (1:31; 8:23; 9:27); they are a symbol of service. Therefore, an important theme in the Gospel is showing the pagan world the love of God through Jesus, the ultimate servant: “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (10:43-45).

1. Overview



Among the various ways of classifying the material of the Gospel of Mark, we will focus on one that organizes the work into five sections: 1. Brief announcement of Jesus as Christ (1,1-13); 2.

The power of Jesus (1:14-8:26); 3. The apostles' affirmation about Christ (8:27-30); 4. Christ's path of suffering (8:31-15:47); 5. The victory of the Messiah (16:1-8).

Let's look at each of these sections.

The Announcement of the Messiah. “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (1:1). When Mark refers to Jesus as the Christ, he uses the Greek translation of the Hebrew word “Messiah.” In the Old Testament, there was a conviction that the Messiah had to be a descendant of King David, and his task would be to restore the kingdom of Israel, making this nation the intermediary for God’s reign on earth. This confession is completed by saying that he is the Son of God.

This initial statement is followed by a brief account of Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist (1:2-11). At the end of the baptism, the Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus, and the voice of God is heard, announcing that Jesus is his beloved Son. In this way, the Father and the Holy Spirit confirm that Jesus is truly the Messiah.

It is worth remembering that by the first century, Jews firmly believed in the coming of the Messiah. However, there were diverse beliefs. Dead Sea Scrolls show that some even believed in the coming of two Messiahs, one priestly and the other a king. Nevertheless, the general expectation was that the Messiah would be a descendant of David and would bring political peace by expelling the invaders. According to Jewish faith, this would be possible if Israel obeyed the Law.

Therefore, the religious authorities saw Jesus as a threat, since He did not strictly submit to the Law, but even went so far as to transgress it. Jesus did not fulfill the messianic and political expectations! Many Jews saw in Jesus a personification of what Deuteronomy 13 described: someone who performed wonders and miracles, but who was nonetheless a false prophet, and therefore deserved to be condemned to death.

The Jews believed that when the Messiah appeared, he would go directly to Jerusalem to take possession of the royal throne. But Jesus, immediately after his baptism, was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert to be tempted by Satan (1:12-13). Jesus' journey would be a long one of tensions and confrontations.

The Power of the Messiah (1:14–8:26). In this section, Jesus begins to demonstrate his authority as Christ. The crowds approach to benefit from his ministry, but they fail to recognize that his power is a manifestation of his messiahship. In fact, nowhere in this section does anyone refer to him as Christ. Even Jesus remains silent about his identity and encourages others to do the same.

Let us not forget that Mark's audience was Christians of pagan (Roman) origin; therefore, they knew that Jesus was the Messiah. But Mark's strategy is to show the tension and doubts of the crowds regarding Jesus, and then to show that the key to unlocking his profound identity is the cross. Unfortunately, some scholars tend to interpret the silence as an indication that Jesus was unaware of his messianic role at the beginning of his ministry. But, as we saw in 1:11, God himself proclaims Jesus as the Messiah. Thus, it is better to understand Jesus' silence as a strategy. Jesus had a goal, the cross, and the more people approached him, the more difficult it would become to fulfill his mission.

The power of Christ in Mark can be divided into four parts: 1. An introduction that establishes the narrative style; 2. Jesus' ministry near Capernaum; 3. Jesus' ministry in the region of Galilee; 4. His ministry beyond Galilee, in pagan areas. Let's look at these sections.

Introduction (1:14-15). “The time has come, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the gospel” (1:15). Mark clarifies that Jesus’ objective in Galilee is to preach the Gospel, that is, that the Kingdom of God is near and is offered to all who repent and believe.
Thus, Mark focuses on Jesus' ministry, beginning in Capernaum and extending throughout Galilee. Unlike the other Gospels, Mark omits Jesus' teaching in other places. Mark only wants to narrate Jesus' activities in Galilee.

Near Capernaum (1:16-3:6). Mark says that Jesus calls his first disciples (1:16-20), which shows us that at first people responded to Jesus with enthusiasm. Jesus asks them to follow him, and they leave their activities and become his disciples. From there he goes to Capernaum to preach and perform miracles (1:21-34). During this time, Jesus' fame begins to spread throughout Galilee, and crowds begin to seek him out, hindering his proclamation of the Gospel. Jesus demands that they not proclaim him as the Messiah and must leave Capernaum, going to the neighboring villages (1:35-45) to preach and perform miracles, and also to escape the crowds. In those villages, he also asks that no one confess that he is the Messiah. Then he returns to Capernaum, where he has disagreements with the Jewish leaders (2:1–3:6) because Jesus declares himself to have the authority to forgive sins, welcome sinners, and act on the Sabbath, the day of rest. As a result, his opponents also begin to grow in number and vehemence. The section ends by predicting Jesus' death (3:6). Why do they not accept Jesus or listen to his teaching? Because his teaching was not what they expected: an earthly kingdom. Jesus speaks of a kingdom that transforms people; hence, his miracles were rejected, since they confirmed what he

The Galilee Region (3:7-6:13). In this stage, Jesus preaches and demonstrates the nearness of the Kingdom of God in regions beyond Capernaum. The more he preaches repentance and forgiveness, the more he attracts crowds, and this fuels opposition. This section begins with Jesus distancing himself from the crowds (3:7-12), which sets a pattern: Jesus' fame spreads far and wide, his enemies try to minimize his ministry, and the crowds make it difficult for him to teach about the Kingdom of God. These seem to be the reasons why Jesus decides to go to other regions of Galilee. In a new section, Mark informs us that Jesus appoints twelve disciples to be his apostles (3:13-19) and help him preach the Gospel and perform miracles. Mark makes it clear that one of these apostles would betray Jesus. Opposition to Jesus comes not only from his enemies but even from some of his followers. Mark recounts that the opposition broadened: now it included the teachers of the law and his own family (3:20-35). For the teachers of the law, Jesus was possessed by the devil, and for his family, he had lost his mind. In section 4:1-34, Jesus dedicates himself to proclaiming the Kingdom of God through parables, so that believers would understand it, and to conceal it from those who did not believe: “The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to those outside, nothing is given except in parables. And these sayings are true: ‘Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not understand; otherwise they would turn and be forgiven’” (4:11-12). However, the parables even confused his disciples, so Jesus had to explain their meaning to them privately, namely: God brings the fullness of the Kingdom after a process of slow growth. Jesus brings the Kingdom of God, but this will come at the cost of suffering and opposition! In his parables, Mark recounts several examples of Jesus' power (4:35-5:43): he controls the weather, casts out demons, heals the sick, and raises the dead. In each of these stories, people fearfully confront danger; Jesus intervenes and averts the danger; but far from calming down, the people's fear only intensifies.

They don't understand who this powerful man is. For example, the disciples express their fear when, in the midst of a great storm, they are about to shipwreck, and Jesus is asleep. They wake him, hoping he will help them be saved. Jesus gets up and commands the wind and the waves to be still. Once saved, Mark says they felt even more fear, for they know they are in the presence of God's power. Continuing the narrative, Mark speaks of the opposition Jesus faces in Nazareth, his hometown (6:1-6), despite all he has done. Finally, Jesus' ministry in Galilee concludes with the sending of the twelve disciples to preach the Kingdom of God (6:7-13). Jesus warns them that when they preach, people will respond in the same way they respond to him: some will accept them and others will reject them.

Beyond Galilee (6:14–8:26). By taking Jesus outside of Galilee, Mark emphasizes some of the themes already discussed. The message of the Kingdom of God spreads rapidly. On the one hand, there is an enthusiastic crowd, and on the other hand, the number of opponents increases (6:14–29). In his first stage of evangelization around Capernaum, Jesus' fame precedes him and extends throughout Galilee. When Jesus leaves Galilee, his fame is already widespread.

Throughout Palestine, even King Herod Antipas heard about him. Mark uses this circumstance to address the question of Jesus' identity: he is not John the Baptist, since Herod had him killed. Mark then recounts several miracles (6:30-56). This section describes Jesus' attempt to distance himself from the crowd, and the crowd's efforts to follow him closely: He feeds 5,000 people first, and then another 4,000; he walks on water; he heals the blind and the deaf. All of this demonstrates his control over creation. This is why the crowd follows him so persistently. But equally persistent is the opposition of the Pharisees (7:1-23), who disagree with Jesus about the observance of the Law and traditions. Finally, Mark recounts further miracles (7:24-8:26) that lead some Gentiles to faith. Meanwhile, the disciples still do not understand. Jesus confronts them directly: “The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. Suddenly he warned them, ‘Be careful, and watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod.’ They said to one another, ‘We really don’t have any bread.’ Aware of this, Jesus asked them, ‘Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not understand or perceive? Are your eyes so closed that you cannot see, and your ears so closed that you cannot hear? Don’t you remember when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls of broken pieces did you pick up?’ They replied, ‘Twelve.’ And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls of broken pieces did you pick up?’”

They answered: Seven. Then Jesus said to them: Do you still not understand?” (8:14-17). Mark's readers were experiencing the same tension as the disciples. Like most Christians, they expected Jesus to return soon to establish God's Kingdom on earth. But instead, they experienced suffering, persecution, and death under Nero's rule. That is why Mark makes it clear that Jesus is the Messiah and that believers should trust that when the time is right, he will establish his Kingdom, just as he promised. While they wait, he continues to care for his Church.

The apostles' declaration about the Messiah (8:27-30). This is the famous scene on the road to Caesarea Philippi, when Jesus reveals to his disciples that he is the Christ. All scholars agree that this confession is the cornerstone of the Gospel. Since Mark's initial confession, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (1:1), this is the first time the word "Christ" appears. Neither his disciples, nor the people, nor the demons had previously suggested that he was the Christ.
In fact, everyone who had tried to identify Jesus had been wrong.
They thought he was a simple miracle worker, a prophet, John the Baptist, a lunatic, or a demon-possessed man.

But now is the moment when Jesus decides to ask his disciples about his true identity: “Jesus asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say I am?’ They replied, ‘Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.’ ‘But what about you?’ he asked. ‘Who do you say I am?’ they answered
Peter: You are the Christ” (8,27-29).

After eight chapters of trials, the apostles finally affirm their conviction that Jesus is the Christ who brings the Kingdom of God.

The Suffering of the Messiah (8:31–15:47). In the first half of the Gospel, Mark focuses on Jesus' ministry, which leads the apostles to affirm that he is the Christ. Now Mark begins to emphasize a different aspect of his messianism: his suffering and death in Jerusalem.

This stage is divided into three sections: 1. Preparation of his disciples for what will happen in Jerusalem; 2. Confrontation with the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem; 3. Passion and death. Let's explore each of these sections.

Preparation (8:31-10:52). The disciples' preparation can be divided into three parts. Each begins with the prediction of Jesus' suffering and death. The **first part** focuses on Jesus as Lord of the Kingdom (8:31-9:29): Mark says that Jesus' strategy for bringing the Kingdom is suffering and death, and he warns his disciples that they too will suffer the same fate if they follow him. After this, Mark recounts the event of the Transfiguration (9:2-13): Jesus reveals his divinity to Peter, James, and John. Moses and Elijah appear to speak with Jesus; a way of saying that the Law and the Prophets are at the service of the Messiah. This event prepares the disciples to live out their faithfulness to Jesus at the moment of fatal outcome. Finally, Mark focuses on Jesus' power to control demons (9:14-29), something his disciples had been unable to do; Jesus teaches them that some demons can only be exorcised through prayer. The **second part** deals with the values of the Kingdom of God (9:30–10:31). This section begins with the prediction of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection; Mark continues to emphasize the disciples' preparation for this event. Jesus explains to his disciples that God does not judge things by human standards.

So, no matter what they suffer, or what strange things happen, they should not judge things the way the world does. Instead, they should be assured that God uses these events to bring about his Kingdom and glorify Jesus. Jesus demonstrates that the world's institutions differ from God's will in five areas: 1. Honor (9:32-42): those who are honored in the Kingdom are the least honored in the world; 2. Courage (9:43-50): disciples must rid themselves of anything that hinders them from reaching the Kingdom of God; 3. Marriage (10:1-12): marriage and divorce must be recognized according to God's Law, not human law; 4. Children (10:13-16): rejecting children is opposing God; 5. Wealth (10:17-31): The rich young man is saddened when Jesus tells him that his attachment to money prevents him from embracing the values of the Kingdom. The **third part** deals with leadership in the Kingdom of God (10:32-52); we can divide it into three sections: 1. James and John must share in Jesus' suffering, drinking the same cup and being baptized with him (10:35-40); 2. Leadership as service: Christians must be servants, taking Christ as their model, who acts as a servant who will die for sins (10:41-45); 3. The example of blind Bartimaeus clarifies that Christians should not sacrifice themselves for any reward other than the Kingdom. Mark insists that the Kingdom of God should not be modeled on the world's pattern. This must have discouraged Mark's readers, because instead of saying that suffering was bad and would soon pass, Mark assures them that suffering was common for Christians and was part of the Plan of God.

Christ: “The sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Rom 8:18)

w Confrontation (11,1-13,37). This section is divided into two parts: opposition (11:1-12:44) and the Olivet Discourse (13:1-37). In the **first part,** Mark narrates how Jesus confronts the Jewish leaders. Previously, Jesus did not seek conflict, despite the opposition of many people who opposed his ministry. Now, Jesus seeks to confront the religious leaders, and in doing so, he heads toward his crucifixion. During his entry into Jerusalem (11:1-11), Jesus is publicly declared Messiah and King of Israel. With the condemnation of the withered fig tree (11:12-14, 20-25) and the cleansing of the temple (11:15-19), Jesus attacks the Jewish authorities, rejecting their authority and influence over the people. Jesus again argues with priests, teachers of the law, and elders (11:27-12:12) and tells the parable of the wicked tenants. By this time, the authorities are ready to arrest him, but fear of the The crowd discouraged them. After that, Jesus refutes the Pharisees and Herodians for collecting the Roman tax (12:13-17), the Sadducees because they had misunderstood what the Scriptures taught about the resurrection (12:18-27), and the teachers of the Law because, although they knew it, they allowed themselves to be dominated by greed (12:28-44). Thus, Jesus confronts priests, teachers of the law, Pharisees, Herodians, and Sadducees, giving each group a reason to hate him and seek his death. The **second part** is a discourse by Jesus to his disciples, the so-called “Olive Mount Discourse” (13:1-37). Here Jesus warns his disciples of the difficulties they would face: they would be taken before the rulers to testify against them; they would be hated and beaten; their families would be persecuted; they would suffer natural disasters and tribulation. But Jesus also gives them hope: The final victory will belong to the Kingdom of God, provided they remain faithful (13:26-27). As expected, Jesus' words stir up more hatred against him, especially when he says that the temple would be destroyed (13:1-2), a prediction that will later be used to accuse him of wanting to destroy the temple (14:58).

Experience (14:1-15:47). This section tells us about Judas's betrayal, the prediction of Peter's denial, the disciples who cannot keep vigil with Jesus in Gethsemane, Jesus's arrest, the two trials, Peter's denial, and Jesus's crucifixion and burial. These are dark chapters, full of failure for the Jewish authorities, the crowds, the Romans, and the disciples. A persecuted community leads Mark to clarify that the community's pain is the same as Jesus's own. Jesus's death experience begins with the anointing for burial (14:1-11), where Mark narrates significant events: priests and teachers of the Law seek a way to arrest and kill Jesus; a woman anoints Jesus with expensive perfume, as a prelude to his burial; Judas Iscariot plots the betrayal with the high priest. This is the key to the story: Jesus' death was no longer a threat, but a reality. Mark then recounts Jesus' last hours with his disciples (14:12-42). This section begins with the Last Supper of Jesus and his disciples (14:12-31); at this meal, Jesus instituted the Eucharist and gave his disciples some guidance to help them cope with his death. For example, he warned them that everyone would abandon him, and Peter would deny him. After the supper,

The group goes to Gethsemane (14:32-42); Jesus is very distressed and deeply saddened, to the point of feeling that he is dying. In a new section, Mark recounts the arrest, trial, suffering, and death of Jesus (14:43-15:15). This section begins with the betrayal by Judas Iscariot (14:43-52), continues with the trial before the priests (14:53-65); then comes Peter's denial (14:66-72); and ends with the trial before Pilate (15:1-15). At the end of these experiences, Jesus is handed over to the Roman soldiers to be flogged and crucified. In the final part of the narrative, Mark speaks of Jesus' experience of suffering and death (15:16-47). Jesus is handed over to the Roman soldiers to be flogged and killed on a cross, like a criminal; From a human perspective, his suffering was overwhelming, and that must have affected Mark's readers, who immediately saw the parallel between Jesus' suffering and their own, and must have been encouraged to persevere in their sorrows.

The Victory of Christ (16:1-8). Mark's Gospel ends at 16:8. Twenty additional verses were later added that do not appear in the oldest and most reliable manuscripts. Many scholars believe that this "long ending" was added by a scribe who disagreed with the idea of the work concluding with the phrase "because they were afraid." But this theory is doubtful, because fear and awe run throughout the Gospel. Therefore, the emphasis on fear was an appropriate way to end this Gospel.

In fact, this ending fits well with the experience of Mark's readers who faced persecution. They must have found comfort in knowing that Jesus' first disciples had also experienced fear.

Mark 16:1-8 recounts the resurrection more briefly than the other Gospels, but this is consistent with the outline of this Gospel. We should remember that the announcement of the Messiah that opens the work is also short, as is the apostles' affirmation regarding the Messiah, which, as we have already said, is the cornerstone of the Gospel.

The section begins with the women going to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body, once the three days since his death have passed. They are greeted by a young man (angel) with a clear and direct message: Jesus has conquered death, just as he had predicted during his ministry: “The angel said to them, ‘Do not be alarmed… he has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him…’ And they fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid” (16:6-8).

The women's reaction is predictable in the context of Mark's account: they are afraid. Almost everyone in Mark's Gospel responds to God's presence with awe and fear. So it's understandable that we have an incomplete narrative: the women were sent to announce the resurrection, but they remain silent because they are afraid. The communities Mark was reading must have experienced weakness and fear, and that's why they identified with these women. But the Good News of the Kingdom of God is already a visible reality, thanks to the Risen One. Jesus Christ has conquered his enemies and death. For that reason, Christians can face their enemies with courage.

Unit 4

CENTRAL THEMES OF THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Introduction

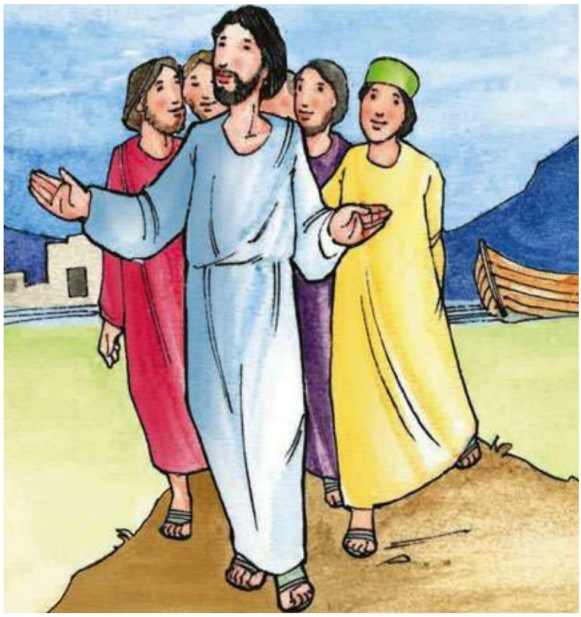
In the previous topics we have established that the study of the literary organization of the work and the review of some of the features of the historical context in which this gospel was born was made possible thanks to Mark's task of selecting and organizing the received traditions, creating with them a coherent work, whose objective was to introduce the reader to the mystery of Jesus Christ, whose path passed through the cross.

Therefore, we can say that we are not dealing with a traditional treatise on theology, but with the joyful communication of Good News: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God who comes to announce the Kingdom of God.

In this final section, we will highlight some themes that develop throughout the work. Although we have already touched upon them here and there, it is important to emphasize them, as they constitute the keys to understanding Marcos's work.

1. The Good News

Jesus' preaching begins with these words: “The time has come, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the good news” (1:15).



When Mark describes the announcement as “Good News from God” (1:14), he is making this announcement the key to understanding the whole book, which begins by proclaiming that we are at the beginning of the good news of Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God (1:1).

Unlike Matthew and Luke, Mark presents his work as “Good News,” an aspect that, by giving the work unity, is what he wishes to emphasize. This word appears seven times, always in key places—

strategic (1,1.14.15; 8,35; 10,29; 13,10; 14,9). What is the Good News?
It was certainly not Mark's intention to give his work a name (that came later); for him, the Good News was the central content of the Christian message. “Gospel” was a term from the missionary vocabulary, whose content is a great truth: the definitive intervention of God in history, through Jesus, who with his death and resurrection inaugurates the Kingdom fully and definitively.

According to Mark 13:10 and 14:9, the gospel must be preached to the whole world. By speaking this way, Mark is referring to the mission of the Christian communities, a task Jesus entrusts to them. This proclamation was to be based on the recollection of concrete events, for example, the gesture of the woman who poured perfume on Jesus' head (14:9), anticipating his death and embalming. These events serve to warn that the missionary path involves tension, confrontation, and persecution, even reaching the ultimate witness that must be given before the authorities and that will surely bring death (13:9-13). But the firm hope is that, in the midst of difficulties, God is present: "It will not be you speaking, but the Holy Spirit" (13:11).

The Gospel that Christian communities must proclaim amidst difficulties is linked to Jesus. The expressions “for me” and “for the gospel” are equivalent (8:35; 10:29); in both texts, Jesus addresses his disciples to explain the consequences of discipleship: renouncing one's own life, family, and possessions to carry out Jesus' mission (3:13-19). Following Jesus and proclaiming the Good News are the same choice. That is why he is present in the proclamation of the Gospel by his disciples. Jesus' work is continued by the disciples.

The message of the proclamation is the nearness of the Kingdom of God, an experience that must be embraced with an attitude of conversion and faith (1:14-15). To believe in the Gospel is to recognize and welcome God who intervenes in history. The irruption of the Kingdom of God is the decisive event in history; with it, the final battle against evil is waged, represented in Mark's Gospel by the demons cast out by Jesus. This Kingdom is inaugurated by Jesus, and therefore his life is Good News that must continue in the lives of Christian communities, chosen to make the same proclamation (3:13-14; 6:7).

2. The Kingdom of God

“Kingdom” is a key concept in Mark’s Gospel. He refers to this term twenty times, fourteen of those times with an adjective that gives it its profound identity: “of God.” The Kingdom of God! Its importance lies not only in the abundance of references but also in its intimate relationship with two other key themes in the Gospel: the Gospel and Jesus. The content of the Good News is the irruption of the Kingdom of God, and Jesus’ preaching focuses on the imminence of that Kingdom, which can only be accessed through a relationship with Him.

What does Mark say about the Kingdom? Jesus proclaims it as imminent (1:15), but after announcing it, he offers no further explanation. Therefore,

On the contrary, he immediately begins to narrate the activity of Jesus, so that his actions and words are presented as the embodiment of the Kingdom. To enter this Kingdom, Jesus demands conversion and faith, something he proposes to his disciples during a private teaching (4:11). In the context of Mark's Gospel, the "mystery of the Kingdom" always refers to the person of Jesus (6:52; 8:17-21), and it is something that only those "within" can understand; only they can comprehend the proclamation of the Kingdom.

The presence of the Kingdom of God is, for now, in its germinal stage. Mark expresses this reality with the image of the seed (4:26-32), a reality full of potential, but one that needs to be welcomed, nurtured, and given a mysterious power that will make it bear fruit. Jesus is the sower, and therefore Mark invites us to recognize that, through his actions, the Kingdom becomes present.

In addition to describing the present presence of the Kingdom of God, Mark focuses on the necessary conditions for entering it. First, it requires a firm resolve to avoid anything that might hinder the path (9:47), along with a humble attitude to receive it as a gift from God (10:14-15). Finally, it requires distancing oneself from anything that does not place Jesus at the center, such as wealth (10:23-25). The condition that encapsulates access to the Kingdom is following Jesus: knowing the mystery of his Person and entering into eternal life (12:34).

But the Kingdom of God is not only a present reality, but also a future one. To enter the Kingdom is to enter another dimension, one that goes beyond this life, a space where it will be fully manifested. The arrival of the Kingdom of God alludes to this dimension (9:1), as do Jesus' words when he took leave of his disciples (14:25). The Kingdom of God, then, is more than something evident; it is a mystery that God reveals to those who accept Jesus. Its presence is now potential, but one day it will fully burst forth.

The invitation to enter has been extended, but it requires a firm resolve; one must decide to follow Jesus with all the demands that entails. Through these details, a conviction common to the entire New Testament emerges: the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus is intimately linked to his person; for the first Christians, the proclamation of the Good News about Jesus included the announcement of the nearness of the Kingdom of God.

In Mark 1:15, Jesus presents himself as the messenger of the imminent arrival of the Kingdom of God, and his proclamation is made concrete in his words and actions. The mystery of the Kingdom coincides with the mystery of his person (4:11), present throughout the entire process of the gestation of this Mystery (4:26-30). But Jesus is not only a messenger, but also the mediator of the Kingdom, which is now manifested in a veiled way, but which will burst forth with power (9:1), and its full manifestation will be in communion with him (14:25), even on the cross (15:43).

3. Jesus Christ, Son of God

Mark presents his work as a narrative of Good News in a double sense. Without explaining it in detail, he proclaims that it is the Good News that Jesus proclaims (“the Kingdom of God is near”) and the Good News about Jesus himself (“he is Christ”).

“Son of God.” These two realities can be summarized in the phrase: “The good news of the Kingdom of God as the proclamation of Jesus, and of Jesus as the place of encounter with the Kingdom.” This, then, is the theological framework of Mark that leads us to the same central point that Mark emphasizes: the personal encounter with Jesus.

It is from this framework that Mark presents Jesus, aiming to engage all his readers in a personal way. Through his questions, he invites us to ask ourselves questions, and through his answers, he invites us to formulate our own responses; the progressive revelation of Jesus invites us to the gradual discovery of our own faith. Either we engage with his dynamic, or we will not understand what Mark is trying to convey to his readers, or to ourselves.

The fundamental question is at the heart of the gospel, at a critical moment: “On the way he asked them, ‘Who do people say that I am?’ They answered, ‘Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and others one of the prophets.’ Jesus asked them again, ‘But who do you say that I am?’” (8:27-29).

This question is key to understanding Mark's perspective. It is not addressed only to the disciples, but to all of us. Nor is it a single question, for it is preceded by other concerns born of the admiration his work inspires: “They were still terrified and asked one another, ‘Who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?’” (4:41).

Mark's response is not only explicit (You are the Messiah: 8:30), but also implicit, that is, through the attitude adopted toward Jesus, for example, the Pharisees' rejection and their conspiracy to kill him (3:6). These responses aim to teach us to discern between correct and false answers and to choose one. Let's look at some of the responses that arise in Mark:

God 's response appears at the baptism (1:9, 11) and the transfiguration (9:2-13). In both cases, the witnesses are few: John the Baptist and three disciples. However, God's response is present at all times, albeit veiled, offering his authority as proof of Jesus' identity: my beloved Son!

The demons give an insistent response in the first part of the Gospel (1:24; 3:11-12; 5:6-9). They confess him as “Son of the Most High God” and “Holy One of God,” but Jesus commands them to be silent, because their words are false and conceal the great temptation of triumphalism.

Peter responds, “You are the Messiah!” (8:30), which summarizes what all the disciples think. Jesus’ reaction is one of disapproval, because Peter neither understands nor accepts the way of the cross. His response is also invalid, because he is unwilling to accept the consequences of discipleship (8:31-38).

The response of the adversaries is represented by the Pharisees. From the beginning , their stance is to shut down and plot the death of Jesus (3:6). Throughout the Gospel of Mark, this attitude is confirmed (12:12), until it culminates in the Passion and Death (14-15).

The people also have their response. Jesus ' actions provoke a question (1:27; 4:41) which they try to answer with the means at their disposal: "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; others say one of the prophets."
(8:28; 6:14-15). Herod's response is similar: “This is John. I ordered him to be beheaded, but he has risen again” (6:16); in the second part they acclaim him “Son of David” (10:46-50; 11:10), but Jesus also rejects that response (12:35-37).

Mark himself gives his answer at the beginning of his Gospel: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (1:1). This is the true identity of Jesus, and the reader knows it from the start. This serves as a guide for understanding the rest of the narrative, but it is only reached after following the path of Jesus, the path of the cross and death (15:39). In this sense, the centurion's proclamation is exemplary for the readers of the Gospel and for us.

Finally , Jesus gives his answer at the crucial moment of the interrogation before the High Priest: “Again the high priest asked him, ‘Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?’ Jesus answered, ‘I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of God Almighty and coming on the clouds’” (14:61-62). The question is specific and includes two equivalent titles: Messiah and Son of the Blessed One. Jesus’s answer goes beyond the question; upon hearing it, the high priest tears his clothes and exclaims, “He is a blasphemer!”

But what exactly does Jesus say about himself? Jesus confesses that he is the Messiah, but not in a dynastic sense, as Israel expected; the Messiah is not a descendant of David (12:35-37). By saying “I Am,” Jesus alludes to the divine name of the Old Testament; the God of the Exodus bears this name: I AM has sent me to you (Ex 3:14).
If that is not enough, Jesus adds the vision of the Son of Man (a title He gives Himself in the Passion), a mixture of Psalm 110 and Daniel 7. With this, Jesus confesses that He has divine attributes.

It is from this confession that his condemnation and death are set in motion. Jesus' first public confession of his true identity triggers his death. The other valid confessions presented in the Gospel are related to his destiny of death: the confession to the Father at the Transfiguration, and the confession of the centurion at the foot of the cross.

Of all these answers, readers should select the valid one and try to make it their own. The valid ones are God's confession, even if veiled; Jesus' confession, which leads to his death; the centurion's confession at the foot of the cross; and Mark's confession, spoken at the beginning of the book. The others are not suitable and should be avoided because they do not reflect the true nature of Jesus.

Progressive manifestation. It is striking that, since Mark's intention is to reveal the identity of Jesus (Messiah, Son of God), he then goes on to emphasize that Jesus commands those who proclaim him as such to be silent: demons (1:34; 3:12), healed people (1:44; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26) and disciples (8:30; 9:8).

What does this contradiction mean? Why was Jesus so keen for them to remain silent and not reveal his identity? Scholars speak of the "Messianic Secret," a fabrication created

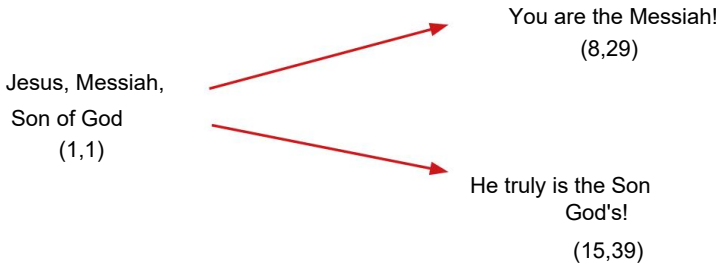
The early Christian communities used this explanation to account for the gap between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith. Since there is no record of Jesus being recognized as Messiah and Son of God, Christians proposed this explanation: there is no memory because Jesus himself imposed silence.

But there is another explanation for this apparent contradiction: it is a literary device that serves the Gospel's objective: to reveal the true identity of Jesus. It is important to note that this Messianic Secret is revealed in the first part of the Gospel. From verse 8:31 onward, Jesus begins to progressively and clearly reveal his destiny of death. In this first part, Jesus commands silence for three reasons: in the case of miracles, because they are only a partial manifestation of the Kingdom; in the case of demons, because they have no voice in the Kingdom; and in the case of Jesus himself, because his confession could be misinterpreted.

However, alongside the imposition of silence, there are also two revelations of Jesus' identity: at the beginning of the Gospel (1:1) and in the episode of his baptism (1:11). But this revelation must remain hidden until Jesus reveals the true meaning of his messiahship; something that will begin to become visible after Peter's response (8:27-33).

The second part of Mark begins with the progressive revelation of Jesus' true identity. This is the main focus of section 8:31–10:52: the Son of Man's journey leads to Jerusalem, where persecution (11:13) and death (14–16) await him. It is a path of service, brotherhood, and self-sacrifice. Therefore, we can say that Jesus' true identity is more closely linked to death than to triumphalism. Jesus is not a triumphant Messiah, but a suffering Messiah. For this reason, the centurion's words at the foot of the cross are the model for all faith: “Truly this is the Messiah!”

Messiah, Son of God. These are the two titles with which Mark describes the identity of Jesus at the beginning of his work (1:1); they are repeated in two strategic places: with Peter (8:29) and with the centurion (15:39). These three texts form a sequence in which these titles are progressively clarified:



The first statement (1:1) is generic and almost meaningless; one must read the entire Gospel to grasp its meaning. The second (8:29) cannot be understood without the third. Taking Peter's confession in isolation carries the risk of understanding it without regard to self-giving and suffering. These are, therefore, two titles that complement each other: Jesus is Messiah because he is the Son of God and because he is given over to suffering.
death on a cross.

From this perspective, both acceptable and unacceptable responses become clear. It is especially significant to observe how Jesus reacts when he is recognized as the Son of David; this title comes closest to the confession of the Messiah-King that the Jewish people awaited. When the people acclaim him as “Son of David,” Jesus remains silent (10:46-50; 11:9-10), but then he invalidates that title: the Messiah is greater than David (12:35-37), and his destiny is clearly linked to death and resurrection (8:31-32a). That is to say, ultimately, his true identity as Messiah involves death, culminating in the victory of resurrection (14:61-62).

The confession of Jesus as Christ, Son of God, is linked to his destiny: In his baptism (1:11), the rite is connected to the passage from death to life (cf. 10:38); in the transfiguration (9:2-9), Jesus asks his disciples to remain silent until he rises; in Jesus' statements, both veiled (12:2-8) and open (14:61), and in the centurion's response (15:39). The recognition of Jesus is thus linked to the recognition of his death and resurrection. With this understanding of the mystery of Jesus, Mark approaches the common affirmation of the early Christians: "He was appointed Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead" (Rom 1:4).

The two titles complement each other and attempt to describe the identity of Jesus, something that can only be discovered through the central mystery of his Passion. Only after this journey can the reader understand the meaning of the words that open the book, and from there, can they retrace Jesus' path. It is a path that must be traveled as a believer and as a community, with eyes always fixed on the example of their Lord.

From all of this, we can conclude that the identity of Jesus as Christ is one of the most difficult topics Mark addresses in his Gospel. Mark wants to ensure that his readers know that Jesus truly came to save them. He is the Redeemer who brings the Kingdom of God to earth. And, even though they can no longer see him, they should have faith that he is still in control and will fulfill his promise to return and complete their salvation.

The Suffering Servant. For hundreds of years, most Israelites lived outside their land. Those who remained suffered under the tyranny of Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman kings. This long history of suffering led the Jews to emphasize an Old Testament prophecy: God would send a messianic deliverer to restore the kingdom of Israel.

Messianic hope took many forms. For example, the Zealots believed in a rebellious Messiah, opposed to Roman authority; the apocalyptic thinkers believed in a supernatural Messiah who would destroy the enemies of the people; the Pharisees believed in a Messiah who would enforce the Law. When Jesus came into the world, many were expecting the Messiah. The messianic hope was for an earthly and political kingdom, under the Messiah's rule, similar to the kingdom of David centuries earlier.

But Jesus presents himself as the Suffering Messiah, without any desire to establish a political kingdom. This caused his rejection. Interestingly, the idea of the Messiah as a suffering servant was not new. Isaiah had already pointed to the role of the Messiah (cf. Isaiah 53), something the New Testament frequently applies to Jesus. We can say that if Jesus did not suffer and serve, he would not have fulfilled the requirements to be the Messiah. Therefore, far from

Instead of disqualifying him as Christ, Jesus' suffering is proof that he is the Messiah. But few analyzed this key from the Old Testament during Jesus' lifetime.
Most were committed to other ideas of messianism.

Alongside the emphasis on Jesus' suffering, Mark stresses his service. He healed and preached; he gave his life as a ransom for many; he obeyed God's will for the benefit of the people. One place where Mark unites the themes of suffering and service is 10:35-45. In that passage, James and John ask Jesus for positions of honor in the Kingdom; the other ten disciples are angered by this request. But Jesus rebukes the Twelve and invites them to a life of service, offering his own life as a model: “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (10:45).

The first thing Jesus does is meet with people in need, right where they are; he pays attention to their material and emotional needs; he listens to what they are saying between the lines. For example, the encounter with the father whose son is tormented by demons; the father asks him: “Please help my lack of faith.”
Instead of rebuking him, Jesus heals his son. Then Jesus goes to Jerusalem to give his life for his followers. This expression of sacrificial love sets aside all self-glory to give his life out of love. The image Mark presents of Jesus is one of suffering, resistance, conflict, and temptation. Yet, he demonstrates loyalty and perseverance: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength” (12:30; cf. Deut 6:5).

As an example, consider the story of the rich young man (10:17-31). He approaches Jesus and asks what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus tells him to sell his possessions and give the money to the poor. But Jesus' demand is greater than the young man is willing to do, so he goes away sad. Jesus is not surprised because “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.” Then he tells his disciples that they must be willing to leave their family, home, and possessions and prepare to be persecuted and killed: “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it” (8:34-35).

Discipleship is a difficult path. For Jesus, it is not possible to enter the Kingdom of God if one trusts in human power, something that “is impossible for men, but not for God, because all things are possible for God” (10:27).
Mark wants his listeners to know that their suffering and persecution are a sign of true discipleship: “To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside all things are said in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand; lest they should turn and their sins be forgiven” (4:11-12).



Activities for evaluation

1. Complete the following statements

a) The Good News of God is making such an announcement the _____ to com-

turn on the whole book.

b) The content of the advertisement is the _____ of the Kingdom of God, an experience that

It must be received with an attitude of _____ and _____.

2. Imagine that, during your prayer time, Jesus asks you, "Who do you say I am?" Answer the question in one paragraph.

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3. Prepare a synoptic chart with the most important points of topic four.

RESOLUTION ACTIVITY FOUR

1. Complete the following statements

a) The Good News of God is making such an announcement the _____ clue to understand the whole book.

b) The content of the advertisement is the _____ closeness of the Kingdom of God, an experience that It must be received with an attitude of _____ conversion and _____ faith.

2. Imagine that, during your prayer time, Jesus asks you, "Who do you say I am?" Answer the question in one paragraph.

_____

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3. Prepare a synoptic chart with the most important points of topic four.