

MARK

Mark's Gospel explores the conflict between God and the cosmic powers of evil—and how God conquers those forces through the crucifixion of Jesus, the suffering servant.

Mark's style is unpolished: the Greek does not appear to be that of a native speaker. And it is action-oriented: Mark uses abrupt transitions that give the gospel a cinematic character. While this means that scholars have historically disparaged Mark, the style has made it a favorite for contemporary literary critics.

Mark presents the disciples as dolts who regularly don't understand Jesus. They frequently misunderstand not only Jesus' esoteric parables and who Jesus himself is but also his most obvious teachings. For example, in Mark 7 Jesus chastises the disciples for not understanding his teaching about what can and cannot defile a person.

Mark emphasizes Jesus' deeds more than words. Jesus is above all a messiah with the power to overcome the spiritual forces entrapping the cosmos. This is most evident in the crucifixion—seemingly an utter failure that proves to be God's greatest victory.

This gospel draws heavily on themes from Jewish apocalyptic literature. Lacking a birth narrative, Mark begins right away with Jesus associated with the fiery figure of John the Baptist and then shows Jesus' words and deeds as God's rule, breaking into the world.

A theme throughout Mark is the "Messianic Secret:" that is, Jesus' true identity as the Messiah is not shown by his wonder-working but is instead revealed at the crucifixion.

