

Basic Outline:

- Act I—“A Shocking Identity” (1:16–8:21)
- Act II—“A Shocking Mission” (8:22–10:52)
- Act III—“A Shocking Reception” (11–13)
- Act IV—“A Shocking Rejection” (14–16)

Structural Markers:

1. Geographical Headings (1-3-3-1)
2. Three-fold Refrains (in each Act)
3. Bookends (Parallel Introductions & Conclusions in each Act)

Outline Showing Mark’s Structure:

Introduction—(1:1–13)

1. Preparing God’s Arrival (1:1–8)
2. God’s Arrival (1:9–13):
 - a. Baptism: This Man is God (9–11)
 - b. Testing: This God is Man (12–13)

Act I—“**A Shocking Identity**” (1:14–8:21) Refrain: ‘hardness/unbelief’

1. Introduction—The Message and the Men (1:14–20)
2. #1—“Hardness of the Jewish Leaders” (1:21–3:6)
 - “*They went into Capernaum*” (1:21)
3. #2—“Hardness of the Jewish People” (3:7–6:6a)
4. #3—“Hardness of the Disciples” (6:6b–8:10)
5. Conclusion—Do the Men Understand His Message or Identity? (8:11–21)

Power Point

The identity of Jesus as the Son of God is quite shocking indeed. This whole section of Mark’s gospel reveals that, apparently, the demons are the only ones convinced that this is the Son of God (1:24, 34; 3:11).

Act II—“**A Shocking Mission**” (8:22–10:52) Refrain: Sufferings & Misunderstanding¹

1. Introduction—“Healing Blindness Progressively” (8:22–26)
 - “*And they came to Bethsaida*” (8:22)
2. Prediction #1 (8:31) & Peter’s Rebuke (8:32–33)
3. Prediction #2 (9:31–32) & Human Greatness (9:33–37)
 - “*They came to Capernaum*” (9:33)
4. Prediction #3 (10:32–34) & Thrones in Glory (10:35ff)
5. Conclusion—“Healing Blindness Entirely” (10:46–52)
 - “*Then they came to Jericho*” (10:45)

Finally, the disciples arrive at some partial clarity—Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ. But this arrival at the proper identity of Christ by way of titles is only a partial sight of who Christ is. Mark does not record that Peter said the words “Son of God” and what becomes clear is that the disciples are confused about Jesus’ mission—they anticipate red carpet while Jesus stubbornly keeps reminding them of imminent suffering and death. This section records Jesus’ all-out assault on the disciples pride and selfish ambition—the one thing that will prevent them from following Him on the way.

Act III—“**A Shocking Reception**” (11:1–13:37) Refrain: They come to Him with

Questions—ἔρχονται (or ἀποστέλλουσιν . . . ἐλθόντες) πρὸς αὐτόν—11:27; 12:13–14, 18

1. Introduction—“A King Not Enthroned in His Temple” (11:1–26)
 - “*Jesus entered Jerusalem*” (11:11) Judaism is cursed
 - “*Then they came to Jerusalem*” (11:15) Judaism is cleansed
 - “*They came again to Jerusalem*” (11:27) Judaism Rejects
2. #1—“Questioned by the Chief Priests and Scribes and Elders” (11:27–12:12; *this was predicted, cf. 8:31*)
3. #2—“Questioned by the Pharisees and Herodians” (12:13–17)
4. #3—“Questioned by the Ignorant & Intelligent Critics” (12:18–37) [consider the story of the Sadducees—all imperfects—as a foil for the story of the last scribe—all aorists]
5. Conclusion—“The True King Curses the Temple’s Future” (12:35–13:37)

The prophecy of Malachi finally comes true—after 400 years, the Lord comes to His temple. Instead of finding the hearts of the nation restored to Him, soft to His message, the fanfare stops and it is as though someone unplugged the power to the Messianic picture. The King comes to His temple and experiences a most shocking reception—nothing but skepticism and interrogations, traps and plots. He curses the temple because Judaism has leaves which would have indicated fruit, but there was no spiritual fruit to speak of.

¹ Most commentators pick up on Jesus’ threefold prediction of suffering in this section. Some also notice the threefold response of arrogance on the part of the disciples that earns Jesus’ rebuke. E.g., Quentin Quesnell, *The Mind of Mark: Interpretation and Method through the Exegesis of Mark 6,52*, Analecta Biblica 38 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969), 146–47. None, so far as I am aware, pick up on the consistency of a threefold refrain in all four sections of Mark’s gospel.

Act IV—“**A Shocking Rejection**” (14:1–16:8) Refrain: -ἀγῶ word-group

1. Introduction—“Faith of a Woman Pre-Crucifixion”(14:1–11)
 - “They came to a place named Gethsemane” (14:32)
2. #1—“Led to be Condemned”² (14:53–15:15)
3. #2—“Led to be Mocked” (15:16–20a)
4. #3—“Led to be Crucified” (15:20b–47)
5. Conclusion—“Fear of Women Post-Resurrection” (16:1–8)

And in conclusion, we see a most shocking rejection. The hostility of the Jews and the betrayal of Judas are not shocking—the former has been constant throughout the gospel, and the latter was already predicted. Jesus goes to Gethsemane, the last stop He initiates on the way. The rest of this Act unfolds with Jesus being led everywhere passively. By the time Jesus gets to the cross, the story is told in such a way that the hostile parties are all described as the backstory: leaders, passersby, and the criminals on the crosses all mock Jesus. Only one Person’s hostility is described in the main story line and He is unnamed by Mark. Darkness falls as judgment and wrath are poured out on Jesus. Human hostilities are backgrounded as inconsequential in light of this rejection. He calls His Father “My God” only this one time—when the Father-Son relationship has been severed due to the suffering in the place of sinners.

² See the table below. The outline of Act IV follows the -ἀγῶ (“to lead, lead away”) word group whenever Jesus is the object, and it is taken directly from the threefold prophecies of His sufferings in Act II. The NASB does not translate this word-group consistently and tends to obscure Mark’s structure. Mark’s wording in 15:1 (“they led Him away”) is different than the threefold refrain; it is a Greek synonym. And in 15:15 (“took Him away”), Mark actually uses the same word. Even if the English seems to disagree with the outline, Mark’s original is precisely consistent with the outline given here.