

MARK’S GOSPEL: A SUMMARY OF ITS PURPOSE, CONTENTS AND STRUCTURAL FORM

For both Jews and gentiles, this gospel is in the form of a four-fold Greek drama in which Jesus completes the Old Covenant and establishes the New.

TITLE: ‘Beginning’ / ‘of the Gospel’ / ‘of Jesus Christ’ (the gospel’s writing style is indicated here: it is abb’) 1.1

PROLOGUE: Old Covenant prophecy is fulfilled: the Day of the Lord is coming. (AD 70 is referenced in the ‘Jerusalemites and Judeans’ who seek ‘water baptism’ in the Jordan.) Jesus is baptised, announced ‘Son’ by God and filled with the Spirit and spends forty days in the desert. He begins his ministry and calls FOUR disciples, TWO plus TWO. (Compare the FOUR, TWO plus TWO, Series.) The Prologue is 1.2-8/9-13/14-20 (ABB’).

THE NARRATIVE’S FOUR SERIES (two plus two, in a classical Greek chiastic composition, ABB’A’):

	Old Covenant being completed...			Old.../New...	New Covenant being established		
Compare: Homer’s structure for the <i>Iliad</i>	- - - - - A - - - - -	B - - - - -	B’ - - - - -	X - - - - -	A - - - - -	B - - - - -	B’
	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
A Days of Jesus in Galilee							
Jesus’ Authority & Power are revealed; his fame spreads rapidly in Galilee; opposition to him does too! (172 verses)	1.21-38 ABB’	1.39-45 ABB’	2.1-22 ABB’	2.23-3.6 ABB’	3.7-4.41 ABB’	5.1-20 ABB’	5.21-43 ABB’
B Days of Increase in Jesus’ Mission							
Jesus is a Prophet: Jews and gentiles alike are to receive ‘Bread’ (‘Life’) from his hands, no longer ‘scraps’. (119 verses)	6.1-29 ABB’	6.30-52 ABB’	6.53-7.23 ABB’	7.24-30 ABB’	7.31-37 ABB’	8.1-21 ABB’	8.22-26 ABB’
B’ Days of Jesus’ Journeying to the Cross and Glory							
Jesus is ‘the Christ’: his followers will be ‘baptised’ as he; and ‘drink the Cup of suffering’ he drinks... (112 verses)	8.27-9.1 ABB’	9.2-32 ABB’	9.33-50 ABB’	10.1-16 ABB’	10.17-31 ABB’	32-46a ABB’	46b-52 ABB’
A’ Days of Jesus in Jerusalem							
Jesus’ Authority & Power are challenged; the focus is on ‘future’ cataclysmic times, his Passion and Resurrection (239 verses)	11.1-11 ABB’	11.12-19 ABB’	11.20-13.37 ABB’	14.1-11 ABB’	14.12-72 ABB’	15.1-47 ABB’	16.1-8 ABB’

EPILOGUE: After giving evidence of his resurrection three times, the first to Mary Magdalene from whom Jesus had exorcised SEVEN demons (compare SEVEN DAYS), Jesus sits down at the right hand of God. Everywhere the New Covenant is preached that believers who are baptised will be ‘saved’. This Aristotelian Epilogue is 16.9-16,19,20a in the form, ABB’.

Where ABB’A’ is the primary classical chiasm which is used extensively by writers of the New Testament’s texts.
Where ABB’XABB’ is the primary structural scheme of Homer’s *Iliad*, where X indicates a central turning point.
Where, for the compositional style ABB’, A is the introductory part, B is the first development and B’ is the second and completing development of the three-part progression.
And where, in all the parts themselves, ‘A’ signifies the presence of a lower-level abb’ style of writing (likewise also a, B, b, B’ & b’).

The writer demonstrates a numerical/numerological interest in a ‘four times seven’ scheme which can be interpreted as: ‘Jesus fulfils God’s universal purposes’ (‘four’ for the four winds, four points of the compass and ‘seven’ for completion, perfection and the fulfilling of intention).

The writer clearly presents, on Day 1, the sun setting on the Sabbath of the Old Covenant and, on Day 28, the sun rising on the Sabbath of the New Covenant. In this way, he indicates where his 4x7 presentation takes us: it is from the Old Covenant to the New.

In Series A, in the first three days, Jesus’ fame spreads rapidly for his teaching authority (note, greater than that of the Old Covenant teachers), his authority over evil spirits and his power to heal. His authority to forgive sins, however, gets him into serious trouble. The turning point day is a Sabbath and it results in Pharisees and Herodians plotting against him. The final three days begin with a gathering of the biggest crowd yet (in fact, ‘seven’ crowds as one), his choosing ‘twelve’ to be with him and his ‘teaching in parables’. They continue with exhibitions of his power and authority over a storm, a demoniac, a woman who had been bleeding ‘twelve’ years and a twelve year old girl who had died.
In Series A’, in the first three days, Mark’s Jesus is questioned about his authority and power; he judges the temple for its old means of being made right with God and ‘teaches in parables’. The turning point day sees a plotting against him, as well as his being ‘fragranced for burial’. In the final three days, the writer points us to the new means of being made right with God: Jesus’ death is ‘a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God’; he is ‘Christ our Passover, sacrificed for us’. See Paul for both these understandings. At the last, Jesus defeats death again, as when he raised the twelve year old child.

In Series B, the balance of the first three and the last three days is achieved with the feedings of the five- and four-thousand, around the central day’s episode when Jesus meets with a Syrophoenician woman. No more will gentiles be fed with scraps. All will receive ‘bread’ (life) from Jesus’ hands.
In Series B’, the balance of the first three and the last three days is achieved with the telling of the two who met with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration and the two who ask that they might sit each side of him in his glory. The focus is on baptism and drinking the cup, on death and eternal life. The kingdom of God and ‘children’ link the middle three days. The two middle series begin, turn and end in the same way as each other. The theme of the first is ‘Bread’ and of the second is ‘Wine’. Through them, Jesus’ followers can express their solidarity with him in life and also in death.

This Gospel interprets Old Covenant scriptures, Paul’s letters (of the 50s and 60s) and the happenings in Jerusalem and Judea in the late sixties and early seventies. Eye-witness as such, of the thirties, is in short supply. This gospel is creed set to story and needs to be read and understood in this way.