

# The World Behind The Text

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## Introduction

According to traditional views of the hermeneutic school, a biblical text has one author-intended meaning, the message that the Holy Spirit guided him to convey to the people of his time. Hence, there may be one valid interpretation and many valid applications. The applications are derived from meaning that justifies the timeless truth of the text. Contemporary scholarship also emphasizes that historical context, literary form, performance, reception, and the situation of the interpreter all influence how a text is understood (Burnet, 2023). The present essay intends to value the importance of “the world behind the text,” “the world of the text,” and “the world in front of text.” The explanation will be given by referring to the Gospel of Mark 1, 4, 9 and 13. The purpose of the selection of these passages from the Gospel of Mark is its radical shift from other gospels such as Matthew and Luke. Mark does not provide any information regarding the birth and childhood of Jesus Christ; instead, he starts with the beginning of the gospel and soon announces, “the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15). The word gospel simply means good news and the good news is about the Kingdom of God. We will analyze the cultural and contextual meaning of the passages, the second goal is the lingual or textual study of the text and finally the significance of the texts for the present-day world (Shively, 2021).

## The Context

The Gospel of Mark opens with “The beginning of the good gospel about Jesus the Messiah....” According to Mark, it is “good news”; second, it is about Christ the Messiah, the Savior and the Son of God. In the fourth verse, another historical figure appears, [John Baptist](#). The office of John the Baptist spoke about the coming of Messiah. John the Baptist thinks himself unworthy before Christ and his glory. The baptism and stay there allude to his mission and give a foundation for the subsequent ministry. The prologue echoes the motif of the wilderness. The first section is set in the wilderness before Jesus left for Galilee. Hence, the primary unifying term in chapter one, from verses one to thirteen, is about wilderness. Right from the beginning, after introducing Jesus Christ, Mark focuses on the ministry of John the Baptist and in doing this, Mark celebrates the redemptive activity of God in providing deliverance for men. The cited prophecy (Ch. 1: 2-3) is fulfilled first in the ministry of John and second with the coming of Christ into the wilderness. Recent study of Mark 1:13 also shows how its unusual reference to Jesus being “with the wild animals” may draw on scriptural traditions and contributes to Mark’s compressed wilderness narrative (Atkins, 2024).

The word “gospel” has roots in Jewish and Greco-Roman settings; Christians were not the first people

to use language of good news. For Romans, the word could mean joyful tidings and could be associated with the emperor. An inscription from Asia Minor concerning Augustus has often been compared with the opening language of Mark. The similarities between imperial announcements and Mark's initial lines help readers consider how the Gospel presents Jesus within, and potentially against, Roman claims about authority and salvation. Only in this context would many ancient hearers understand Mark's announcement of Christ as Messiah. Right after the announcement of Christ as the Lord and Son of God Mark introduces John the Baptist. John is a vital figure in the history of redemption and revelation.

Many believed that a prophet like Moses would appear to signal the "last days" (I Macc. 4:42-46; 14:41; Deut. 18:15-19). Hence, John's appearance at the beginning of the Gospel of Mark was an eschatological event. Therefore, the good news began with the coming of Christ and John the Baptist. Although it is difficult to discover John as a person, the discovery of the Qumran community in the Judean wilderness has prompted discussion of whether John may have shared features with other Jewish renewal and purification movements. Mark centres attention around three components in John's service, every one of which is identified with the Old Testament predictions with which he has introduced his Gospel: (1) John was a man of the wilderness; (2) he performed his service of baptism in the wilderness, thus preparing the way for the Christ; and (3) he declared one more important than himself who was to come after him. Each detail of the five verses is identified with at least one of these three accentuations. To this point, we have analyzed the "world behind the text," its contextual meaning and its background by analyzing a few verses from the Gospel of Mark chapter one. Mark's baptism narrative also introduces ritual themes that recur at major turning points in the Gospel (Wheatley, 2023).

## The Text

A reasonable conception of Mark's aim in the Gospel reveals insight into the particular character of his style. Mark's mission was to extend Christian confidence in an atmosphere of vulnerability where persecution and suffering were realities. He chose and organized the tradition to introduce Christ, who proceeds to talk and act seriously with regard to emergencies. What was demanded by the circumstance was not merely a past word, descriptive of what Jesus had said and done, but a word through which the living Lord could be heard and known. The record Mark drew up is portrayed by effortlessness and straightforwardness. His style and language are not as detailed as that of Matthew or Luke. The frequent use of the word "immediately" increases the sense of excitement and vividness. Modern narrative scholarship increasingly treats Mark as a coherent and deliberately shaped story rather than a crude collection of episodes (Shively, 2021; Wheatley, 2023).

In this section we will evaluate "the world of the text"; the purpose is to analyze literary devices used by Mark to tell the good news. The passages are selected from chapter four because in this chapter Jesus teaches through parables, as in other synoptic gospels (Mark 4:1-9). The purpose of telling a story rather than abstractions was obvious. Jesus had a wide range of audience, and he was cautious

about his words; hence, he told his message in concrete pictures for maximum understanding. In chapter four, the parable of the sower or soil is a famous parable Jesus said to the people. The intention of telling the truth in parables can be considered in relation to attention, disclosure, misunderstanding, and response. The parable is about teaching: one can study the teaching, analyze it, and make categorizations, but without sowing nothing can grow. Performance-oriented readings also remind interpreters that Mark's narrative was heard, embodied, and responded to by audiences rather than only read silently as a printed text (Wheatley, 2023).

## The Significance

In this section, we will see "the world in front of the text"; in other words, we will see if the text has anything for our time. This is the most important section as the timelessness of the word of God. The selected text is from chapter 13 of the Gospel of Mark. The chapter is very significant because this chapter predicts the destruction of the temple (Mark 13:1-2). The temple was destroyed by Roman forces in 70 CE, and interpreters continue to debate how Mark 13 relates to that event, to the suffering of Mark's first audiences, and to future expectation. When the disciples asked about the fulfilment of the word, Jesus' answer described conflict, deception, persecution, and upheaval before the coming of the Son of Man (Mark 13:5-27). His words function as farewell instructions calling for endurance and watchfulness. Chapter 13 is one of the most debated chapters in the gospels, and recent scholarship situates its wars, rumours of wars, national conflict, and natural hazards within Jewish and early Christian apocalyptic traditions (Hombana, 2024).

The continuing significance of Mark 13 does not depend on calculating dates or attaching every modern crisis to a particular verse. The text has spoken to communities facing persecution, political violence, uncertainty, and social disruption, while warning readers not to be deceived. "That day and hour no one knows," says Jesus, no one but the Father. The statement stresses human limits and the need for faithfulness rather than speculation. Reception history further demonstrates that texts are understood within the historical situations, theological questions, and practical concerns of their interpreters (Burnet, 2023).

## Conclusion

In the first section of this exegetical essay we evaluated "the world behind the text" and noticed how important this strategy is in deciphering contextual meaning of the text when it was produced. In the second section, our focus was the text, the use of literary terms and literary devices, and the selection of language, which was cautious due to the sensitive subject matter of the message. In the final section, we tested the continuing significance of the text by evaluating the temple discourse, suffering, watchfulness, and hope in Mark 13. Hence, it is very important to study "the world behind the text," "the world of the text," and "the world in front of text" in order to understand historical setting, literary communication, and the changing reception of the text (Kirk, 2023; Burnet, 2023).

## References

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