

**Comparative Characterisations of Jesus and the Disciples in the Gospel of Mark,
with Special Reference to Ancient Oral Narration**

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ABSTRACT

The different methodological approaches applied to the study of the characterisation of Jesus and the disciples in the Gospel of Mark have contributed much to our knowledge of Jesus and his disciples. The recent interest in the oral-aural dynamics in the communication of Mark's story has caused us to understand that Mark wrote not to be read silently and privately, but read aloud/performed publicly before a live audience, who were mostly unable to read and belonged to an oral culture (chapter 2). Thus, encompassing the strengths of previous approaches and venturing upon newer frameworks (orality, social/cultural memory, and performance criticism), we develop an eclectic approach, which we term oral-memorial-comparative hermeneutics, to address how an oral narrative, such as Mark's Gospel, would have been composed, communicated, and comprehended in an ancient oral culture (chapter 3). More specifically, such an approach helps in our inquiry into how the characterisations of Jesus and the disciples in Mark's narrative function rhetorically in the context of an ancient oral narration, in relation to following Jesus and belonging to his community.

This approach considers how both the author and the target audience would have exploited their socio-historical context for the composition and comprehension of the characterisations of Jesus and the disciples in the Gospel of Mark. Thus, this thesis analyses Mark's characterisations of Jesus and his disciples in the context of an ancient narration, particularly in first-century Palestine. Through the lens of orality, social memory, and performance criticism, Mark's characterisations of Jesus and his disciples would have shown how one should follow Jesus and belong to his group. We conclude that if Mark's target audience appreciated the association of Jesus and his disciples over against other groups (chapter 4) and if they were convinced of Mark's ideological thrust represented by the character of Jesus over against his disciples and other characters (chapter 5), then it is more likely than not that they were moved to act upon following Jesus in faithful discipleship and belonging to his group (chapter 6). Thus, our findings support the thesis of this research that Mark's characterisation of Jesus and his disciples (in relation to other characters and set in an ancient oral narration) dramatizes an ideological clash (between the way of domination and the way of Jesus—service and sacrifice), which would have aided in the identity formation of Mark's community.