

# STUDY OF THE CHARACTER OF JESUS IN MARK 4:35-8:30

\*Ferry Hartono

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## Abstract:

*Yesus ditampilkan Injil Markus sebagai karakter yang misterius. Studi tentang kemisteriusan pribadi Yesus semakin menanjak belakangan ini sejak Wrede mengungkapkan teori tentang “Rahasia Mesianis”-nya. Analisis karakter Yesus secara naratif dalam artikel ini merupakan salah satu upaya terfokus untuk membantu mengungkap beberapa aspek dari “Rahasia” ini. Saya menggunakan metode analisis karakter yang dirancang oleh Malbon, yang berfokus pada performa karakter, dalam hal ini Yesus. Analisis ini menaruh perhatian pada apa yang karakter-karakter lain katakan kepada dan tentang Yesus; apa tanggapan Yesus; apa yang Yesus lakukan, serta apa karakter-karakter lain lakukan sebagai tanggapan atas kata dan tindakan Yesus. Pembahasan hanya dibatasi atas Mrk 4:35-8:30 karena dalam bagian inilah terjadi proses identifikasi karakter Yesus yang berpuncak pada pengakuan Petrus atas Kemesiasan Yesus. Proses ini tampak terkait secara hakiki dengan tonggak peristiwa misi pertama Yesus ke seberang, yang notabene merupakan daerah orang non-Yahudi. Hasil dari studi ini menunjukkan karakter Yesus yang familiar, meneguhkan beberapa fakta yang sudah ada sebelumnya, sekaligus menyajikan aspek-aspek yang mungkin mengejutkan.*

## Keywords:

Messianic Secret, Christology, Mission, Universality, Character

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Prominent scholars such as Dunn and Hengel encased Jesus in Mark as a mysterious figure, appreciating the milestone research of Wilhelm Wrede.<sup>1</sup> The command to keep silent and the ignorance of the disciples created many questions for the readers. Thus, the “theological construction” of Jesus’ character was commenced. For starter, the readers were told since the beginning the two titles of Jesus. This introduction alone could make the whole reading of Mark a quest to seek the answer why Jesus was Christ and Son of God. The readers reflected consciously or unconsciously on the details of the messages that might be hidden between the lines, leading to the Answer. Any new information, no matter how subtle, was important to bring forward this Messiah-and-Son-of-God character into light. At this point, not only the plot, but the study of each character, no matter how small their role was, became significant.

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\* Ferry Hartono adalah dosen Kitab Suci di STIKAS St. Yohanes Salib dan alumnus dari Urbaniana, Italia-Roma 2012.

<sup>1</sup> J. D. G. DUNN, “The Messianic Secret in Mark”, in *Tyndale Bulletin* 21 (1970), 92-117 and M. HENGEL, “The Messianic Secret in Mark”, in W.G. JEANROAD and A. D. H. MAYES (eds.), *Recognizing the Margins, Developments in Biblical and Theological Studies*, Columbia Press, Dublin (CA) 2006, 24-47.

Gundry continued to say there was never any messianic secret in Mark. He argued that the Gospel of Mark was a straightforward apology for the cross. It was quite a presumptuous claim, especially when he needed more than a thousand pages, asking and arguing through “labyrinthian journey” (his own term), to reach that conclusion.<sup>2</sup> Gundry made several strictures regarding the tendency of spiritualization or mystification of the events in Mark. I agree that the symbolization of some events in Mark was unnecessary. For example, we will not go anywhere seeing a sunken boat as a symbol of the Church or tracing back a back-handed slap to some messianic verses. However, I could always relate the question Jesus asked to the disciples to any reader: “But who do you say that I am?” (Mark 8:29). This question is relevant to today. And it was about the messianic nature of the character of Jesus.

The study of the messianic nature of the character of Jesus in Mark can be focused on several texts. However, considering the nature of the revealing moment in Mark 8:29, it should be interesting to trace back the process. Why do I start from Mark 4:35? Because the verse marked the new episode of Jesus’ mission. He told His disciples, “Let us go across to the other side.” The other side means the country of the Gerasenes (Mark 5:1). This is the first time Jesus in Mark entered the land of the gentiles. The mission to the gentiles was a crucial point to bolster the character of Jesus in a universal manner. With that Jesus stated clearly that He did not come exclusively for the Jews.

## CENTRALITY OF JESUS IN MARK

Every story has its main characters. In a movie, we can assume one to be a main character according to his/her screen-time. Basically, the one who makes appearance the most should be the main character. In a book, it is not so much different. We can decide which character should be the most important by counting how many times his/her/its name or pronoun show up. Sometimes in a story, whether it’s in a movie or a book, the Narrator can create important characters that never present directly in the events of the story. We only know them through the biography, monologue or dialogue parts of the story. Nevertheless, their existences should not be seen of non-importance. And in the Gospel of Mark this point was particularly accurate as we will see later.

Mark told a story of Jesus as a main character. Even though he didn’t tell a story about Jesus alone, clearly the central of the story was Jesus. The other main characters were the disciples and their adversaries. The Jesus in Mark was near to the first readers and it might even be possible that they themselves were the direct witnesses of the events, assuming the early readers of Mark were the Judaic-Christian community. By using the “counting” method, we’ll find out that most possibly the main character in the Gospel of Mark is Jesus. His name only (“Vl̄hsou/j”) in all its derivations appears 82 times in 80 verses. The second most frequent personal names are Simon (“Si,mwn”) and the elder Jacob (“Vla,kwboj”), brother of Giovanni, the apostle. Each of them appeared only 11 times. As a group, Jesus’ disciples appeared quite often, 39 times in 38 verses, but still far compared to the appearance frequency of the name of Jesus. On these facts alone, it should be safe to say that Jesus was the main character of the story. Next would be His disciples as a group of characters. The other important characters which shown up quite frequently are the adversaries of Jesus. The word “grammateu,j” (scribe) and its derivations appeared not less than 21 times. We also had 12 hits on “Farisai/oj” (Pharisee).

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<sup>2</sup> Robert H. GUNDRY, *Mark, A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross*, William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids (MI) 1993, 2-26.

The importance of character of Jesus demonstrated not only by the quantity, but especially by the quality of his appearances. Basic factors to distinguish main characters from the minor characters are their dynamicity (developments or evolutions of character) and complexity (the readers are unconsciously forced to make ‘second guesses’ on them). Jesus had them both. Exhaustingly repeated, the titles of Jesus, verified by events, dominated the whole gospel of Mark. As shown rightly by Vironda, almost every chapter of Mark was a description of His words and actions.<sup>3</sup> The other characters were there only to indirectly strengthen the image of this main character. Malbon, however pointed out the purpose beyond the performances of Jesus. The things that Jesus said and did in Mark were never only showcases of what He could do or who He was. They served as discourses of discipleship.<sup>4</sup> The Gospel of Mark was a story about Jesus; not only an introduction to His character, but also served as a guideline for those who wanted to follow Him.

### APPROACHES TO MARK’S CHARACTERIZATION OF JESUS<sup>5</sup>

Uriel Simon attested that the number of persons in Old Testament narrative from every period was extremely small. He argued that “no single scene in the whole Old Testament has more than three active characters and the dialogue only rarely develops into a three-way conversation”.<sup>6</sup> This statement was logical because most of the OT writers might not have any direct relationship with the characters they were writing about. We rarely come across psychological analysis about a character in the OT. Most of the characters in the OT were presented to us as persons who acted, not persons who thought or reflected, apart from some extraordinary characters, such as David, Job, Jonah and Elijah. The letter to Hebrews described the peoples of the Old Testament were justified according to their acts of faith (Hbr 11). Only through their actions we could justify them. However, in the New Testament we find utterly different things.

Despite disputes about the authors of the NT texts, the descriptions of the characters, especially of Jesus, were from near witnesses. Jesus’ character was described in more vivid manners than a mere action-man. The contexts of the events in the story were evidently nearer to the readers than those of the OT. From the first or second witnesses the readers have in their hands the events of Jesus. What they read in the gospels were more than just descriptions of what Jesus did. They could sense also the internal conflict, emotions, and the will of Jesus. Even so, it didn’t make the characterization of the Jesus in Mark or the Markan Jesus an easier task.

Alberto Mello began the introduction of his book promulgating “Jesus is Hebrew and that He will be for always” and “Jesus is Hebrew and that He always was”.<sup>7</sup> The tension of Christian-Hebrew dialog nowadays was influenced deeply by this approach: that Jesus was born, died, resurrected, and ascended to heaven as a Jew. On this matter, Dunn inferred the Christianity shameful heritage of Anti-Judaism had pushed forward this

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<sup>3</sup> Marco VIRONDA, *Gesù nel Vangelo di Marco, narratologia e cristologia*, EDB, Bologna 2003, 121-139.

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Struthers MALBON, *In the Company of Jesus, Characters in Mark’s Gospel*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville (KY) 2000, 41.

<sup>5</sup> Characterization or in Aristotle’s terms “rendering a character” is an effort from the part of the Narrator, to bring any information available out of a character or characters (*Poetics* VI, 5). Characterization can be direct or indirect, literal or implied. Good characterization is important in a story. By giving the readers a strong sense of characters’ personalities and complexities, the characters become vivid, alive, and believable to some point that they are ‘connected’ to the readers.

<sup>6</sup> Uriel SIMON, “Minor Characters in Biblical Narrative”, in *JSOT* 46 (1990), 11.

<sup>7</sup> Alberto Mello, *L’ebraicità di Gesù e dei Vangeli*, Edizioni Dehoniane Bologna, Bologna 2011, 5.

approach to a new level.<sup>8</sup> Painfully palpable as Mello's and Dunn's arguments were, I found myself approaching the Jewish nature of Jesus in a more natural-cultural manner in accordance with Malina. Teaching in Creighton University Omaha, NE, Malina was curious about how many Americans read the Bible and claimed to understand what its authors meant. The ancient Mediterranean, Malina argued, was a high-context society, where discourse took share cultural values naturally. This contrasted with the modern western world, which was a low-context society in which discourse tended to be more specific and specialized (i.e. to particular groups, subcultures, etc.).<sup>9</sup> As an ancient Mediterranean person, Jesus ought to be seen as a man of His cultural legacy.

Jesus' background as a Jew should not be put aside in an attempt of characterizing Him. Nevertheless, Jesus was also a man in general sense. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon offered us some categories as tools to make a characterization of Jesus:<sup>10</sup>

	Others	Jesus
SAY(S)	what other characters and the narrator say to and about Jesus: projected Christology (2)	what Jesus says in response to other characters: deflected Christology (3) what Jesus says instead of what other characters and the narrator say: refracted Christology (4)
DO(ES)	what other characters do that mirrors what Jesus says and does: reflected Christology (5)	what Jesus does: enacted Christology (1)

It is redundant to repeat Malbon's whole studies, but worthy it is to summarize some of them:

- a. What the Markan Jesus did is to preach and to teach, to exorcise and to heal, and to insist on practical service to those with the least status in society and thus, to suffer persecution and death by the authorities of that society. (p. 55)
- b. What others say: Jesus' roles in the cosmic struggle between God and Satan are (a) to be the bringer of God's rule and He does it well by His obedience, (b) to encourage His followers to follow His teaching and example, though it will be difficult, especially at the risk of persecution (pp. 124-128). These conclusions are generally derived from His titles that the Narrator and the other characters give Him: "Son of (the Most High) God" (1:1; 3:11; 5:7; 15:39), "the Holy One of God" (1:24) and "Christ" (8:29), without overlooking what Jesus' opponents says about him: "blasfhmei - He is blaspheming" (2:7), "He is possessed by Beelzebul" (3:22), and "By the prince of demons he drives out demons" (3:22). (pp. 124-128)

<sup>8</sup> J. D. G. DUNN, "Jesus and Purity: An Ongoing Debate", in *NTS* 48 (2002), 449.

<sup>9</sup> Bruce J. MALINA, "Dealing with Biblical (Mediterranean) Characters: A Guide for U.S. Consumers", in *BTB* 19 (1989), 127-128.

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth S. MALBON, *Mark's Jesus: Characterization as Narrative Christology*, Baylor University Press, Waco (TX) 2009, 18.

- c. Sometimes what Jesus says in response to other characters does not match with what the other characters and the Narrator say about Him, especially in the meaning. One look at the conversation between Jesus and Peter can illustrate how the “Christ- Messiah” in Peter’s mind is not the same as one in Jesus’. Jesus does affirm this title of His, at least implies it, by not denying the statement of Peter (8:29) and His exhortation about the false Messiah (13:21). But, this Christ of Jesus is also “the Son of Man”<sup>11</sup>, the titles that Jesus uses for Himself often (14 times in 13 verses). (pp. 190-194)
- d. What Jesus says instead: as the Son of Man: (a) He has the authority to forgive sins on earth (2:10), (b) He is lord even of the Sabbath (2:28), (c) He must suffer and will be handed/betrayed and then condemned to death, but He will be resurrected (8:31; 9:9.12; 10,33; 14:21; 14:41), (d) He will be seated in the right hand of the Almighty and will come in glory (8:38; 13:26; 14:62), and (e) He does not come to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many (10,45). Based on the terms Jesus uses to announce Himself, Malbon arrives at a conclusion that what matters for Jesus is not His own identity, but His role, His influence. She continues to say that Markan narrative Christology focuses not on the nature of Jesus but on process: “What is God doing?” and “What will the hearers of this good news do?” (pp. 215-217)
- e. The conflicts between Jesus and the other characters can be found in almost every chapter of Mark. Malbon demonstrates that the actions of Jesus in Mark often amaze the other characters. Some of them even treated as ‘provoking’, especially to His opponents. The conflict is not only between Jesus and those who come to oppose Him in the human realm (the Roman leaders and, for the most part, the Jewish leaders), but also between Jesus and those who come to oppose Him in the transcendent realm (Satan, demons and unclean spirits). The result of these conflicts is the ‘tragedy’ upon the cross after all that Jesus did (see n.1 above). Some may say that Jesus dies tragically, but the implied readers of Mark know well that the cross is not the end. Moreover, Jesus still has some exceptional persons on His side, such as a council member, Joseph of Arimathea and a Roman centurion. These two persons are exceptional because they are from the groups that were supposed to be Jesus’ opponents. (pp. 227-230)

The remarkable studies of Malbon gave us a panoramic view of the character of Jesus. She had done a great job to reveal some dimensions of Jesus’ character that demanded the characters within the Gospel of Mark as well as the readers to choose whether to believe in Him or not. There seemed to be some overlaps between the categories, but as she said herself, it was unavoidable. These interesting categories seemed promising (and complicated enough) at first, but despite all her efforts, at the last pages of her book, Malbon admitted her failure to bring out the character of Jesus apparently, though she still felt blessed. In her conclusion, she implied that even Mark himself had failed to present his audience a clear character of Jesus. The only thing that was clear about Jesus was His focus, which was always on God. While Mark tried his very best to focus on Jesus, Jesus never let the focus felt on him. This internal tension seemed to be the characteristic of the Gospel of Mark.<sup>12</sup>

God was the implied main character whom Jesus wanted us to recognize, but God did not appear as a full character in the Gospel of Mark. He appeared only twice as a voice from heaven and from the cloud. This gave away a subsequent problem: sufficient

<sup>11</sup> Malbon translated the phrase “ὁ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου” as “the Son of Humanity” probably to exert the universality of Jesus’ events. But, I prefer “the Son of Man”, which is the more literal translation.

<sup>12</sup> MALBON, *op. cit.*, 18.

understanding of the character of Jesus was impossible because the implied main character was nowhere to be analyzed. Therefore, the character of Jesus in Mark was unfathomable. It might be true, but somehow it was discouraging. We could at least try to grasp a better understanding of Jesus' character. In this case, it might be helpful, as instigated by Vironda, to approach Jesus as a person who received “*caratterizzazione dall'alto*” by putting great attention on each event with direct or indirect reference to God.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, Mark not only presented the readers Jesus who said or did something like what Malbon's chart above claimed. If there were another thing lack in the work of Malbon, it should be the study of internal analysis or emotional description of Jesus' character, which includes His sentiments and thoughts.

In our text (Mark 4:30-8:35), the readers could discover the Jesus who amazed “*evqau,mazen*” (6:6; cfr. 8:17 and 8:21), asked passionately (5:30; 8:27), argued (6:37; 7:1-23) and expressed his feelings and thoughts frequently (4:40; 5:36; 6:4; 7:27). Another interesting expression was the verb “*evpitima,w*”. It appeared quite frequently in Mark. In our text, it appeared twice in 4:39 and 8:30. This word can be translated into two different meanings depends on the object. The first one in 4:39 should be translated as “to rebuke”, but the second one should be translated as “to severely forbid”. Despite the difference, each use of the word indicated a strong Subject. The Jesus in Mark was shown as a person with strong emotion and had no problem expressing His opinions and beliefs.

The Jesus in Mark, on one hand, had a strong character, but on the other hand, could be full of compassion. The verb “*splagcni,zomai*” appeared twice in our text (6:34; 8:2) and four times in the whole gospel of Mark (the two other verses are 1:41; 9:22). This verb, which in the NT only appeared in the Synoptic gospels, had same root as “*spla,gcnon*” which literally meant intestines or the inward parts of the body, such as heart, bowels and liver. However, figuratively it meant the tender emotion of a person in whole. The verb “*splagcnizomai*”, rather than “fell sympathy with”, should be better translated as “moved interiorly/deeply towards”. In NT, this strong verb was attributed mostly to Jesus (Mt 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 20,34; Mk 1:41; 6:34; 8:2; 9:22; Lk 7:13), and then also to the Good Samaritan (Lk 10,33), the father of the prodigal son (Lk 15:20), and the king in the parable of the wicked servant (Mt 18:27). Each story showed us a deep compassion of the Subject.<sup>14</sup>

Mark demonstrated the internal aspect of Jesus in yet another example in 8:12. He told us that Jesus “*amastena,xaj twpneu,mati*”, groaned/lamented/sighed deeply in spirit because of the ignorance of the Pharisees. The verb “*amastena,xw*” occurred only one time here in the NT and 4 times in LXX. The OT contexts of the event when this verb occurs were always grave: the final groan of the famous scribe and martyr, Eleazar (2Macc 6:18), the groan of Suzanna because of the harsh injustice she was facing (Dan 13:22/Suz (Th) 1:22), the lament of the priests for the destruction of Jerusalem (Lam 1:4) and the sigh of a husband because of his evil wife (Sir 25:17). The gravity of the problems in these OT passages was enormous.<sup>15</sup> To say that Mark chose this verb deliberately might be uncertain. Nevertheless, to say that he chose it unconsciously would be more doubtful. It is

<sup>13</sup> VIRONDA, *op. cit.*, 127-135.

<sup>14</sup> Aware completely of the limit of my study, I would like to recommend the more comprehensive study of the sentiments of Jesus. This book contains the study of affectionate words of Jesus in all four gospels: Americo MIRANDA, *I sentimenti di Gesù, i verba affectuum dei Vangeli nel loro contesto lessicale*, Centro Editorial Dehoniano, Bologna 2006.

<sup>15</sup> Yes, even the last one, you need to read the whole chapter of Sir 25 to get the picture of it; not to be anti-feminist because an evil husband is just the same, or even worse.

likely that Mark wanted to express the gravity of the context and implicitly portrayed Jesus as a solicitous person. He even added the dative “*tw| pneu,mati*” which could be translated “in His spirit” to stress out the internal nature of the verb.

### MARK 4:35-8:30: PART-BY-PART ANALYSIS

As excruciating the fact that it might just be impossible to get a clear understanding of Jesus’ character in Mark, it would never in vain to study Him more. On a contrary, the mysterious nature of Jesus would bring about endless new discoveries. It would be interesting to discover important information in minor details. With the next analysis, I would like to see if it is true, keeping in mind that Jesus was, is, and always will be a Jew.

Jesus’ calmed the storm: the first sign of the disciples’ ignorance (4:35-41)

Enacted Christology	Jesus said to His disciples, “Let us go across to the other side ( <i>ei j to pe,ran</i> ).” → Jesus was asleep. → Awakened. → <b>Calmed the sea.</b>
Projected Christology	Narrator: The disciples were very afraid witnessing Jesus’ power over nature. Disciples: <b>“Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?”</b> → “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”
Deflected Christology	“Peace! Be still!” “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?”
Refracted Christology	<i>Ibid.</i>
Reflected Christology	The wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. The disciples became afraid of Jesus.
In rapport with God	His supreme control over nature was not of human.
Sentiments and thoughts of Jesus	His reaction implied His disappointment or just awe because of the disciples’ ignorance and lack of faith.

First Journey to the gentiles’ territory: the possessed Gerasene (5:1-20)

Enacted Christology	Jesus landed on the other side ( <i>ei j to pe,ran</i> ), the Gerasenes’ territory → <b>Cast out demons from a possessed man</b> → Forbade the liberated man to follow Him → Told him to proclaim the liberation → Left the territory on boat.
Projected Christology	Narrator: The demons bowed down before Him (5:6). The Gerasenes were afraid of him. (4:15) Legion: “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.” He begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. “Send us into the swine; let us enter them.”

Deflected Christology	“Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!” He gave them permission.
Refracted Christology	“Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!”
Reflected Christology	The demons left the man and entered a herd of swine. → The swine herds ran off and told it in the city and in the country. → The people became afraid of Him and begged Him to leave the neighborhood. → The liberated man proclaimed in the Decapolis what Jesus had done for him.
In rapport with God	The ability or authority to cast away demon wasn't of human. Jesus did mention that that was a work of the Lord out of His mercy. (5:19)
Sentiments and thoughts of Jesus	Interesting enough that Jesus heard out the plea of the evil spirits to transfer to the swine, though clearly it would give Him trouble.

Jesus resurrected the daughter of Jairus and healed a woman with hemorrhage (5:21-43)

Enacted Christology	Jesus crossed again in the boat to the other side (eij to pe,ran). → Jesus went to cure Jairus' daughter. → On his way there, He praised the faith of a woman healed by touching his cloak. → Went inside the house of Jairus → Drove out the skeptics. → Resurrected the assumed death daughter or Jairus. → He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.
Projected Christology	Narrator: One of the leaders of synagogue came, saw Him, and fell at His feet. → Jesus heard out his plea. → On their way, Jesus searched for the person who touched His cloak and kept on searching despite the protest of His disciples. → Jesus kept on insisting Jairus to believe in Him despite the skepticism from the family and some other people → Jesus only let three of His disciples to follow Him to go to Jairus' house.  The sick woman: “If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.”  Disciples: “You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?’”  The sick woman knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth.  Family of Jairus: “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?”  People at the house of Jairus laughed at Him.
Deflected Christology	“Who touched my clothes?”

	<p>“Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”</p> <p>But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only believe.”</p> <p>“Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.”</p> <p>Jesus put them all outside.</p> <p>“Talitha cum.”</p>
Refracted Christology	<p>But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only believe.”</p> <p>“Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.”</p> <p>Jesus put them all outside.</p>
Reflected Christology	<p>The sick woman knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and <b>told him the whole truth.</b></p> <p>The people at the house of Jairus laughed at Him.</p> <p>And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about.</p> <p>The people present there were amazed.</p>
In rapport with God	<p>Even a touch of His cloak could heal; His conscience of His power; the resurrection of a dead child was a divine action.</p>
Sentiments and thoughts of Jesus	<p>Several interesting accounts: (a) Jesus’ was very conscience of the leaking of His power, He immediately recognized (ευφραδισθησεν) it, (b) He attributed the healed woman “daughter” (θυγατηρ), (c) Jesus was overhearing (παρουκουσθησεν) the claim of the family about the death of Jairus’ daughter, (d) He did not permit (ουκ επιηκει) His disciples, except three, to go with Him to house, (e) Jesus sent out (εκβαλεν) those who had laughed at Him, and (f) He ordered them strictly (στηναι αυτους πολυ) to hide the fact of the resurrection.</p>

Jesus was rejected by His townsfolk (6:1-6a)

Enacted Christology	<p>Jesus went back to His hometown → Taught in the synagogue on Sabbath → Did no miracle, except several healings by laying His hands on them.</p>
Projected Christology	<p>Narrator: Many who heard Jesus were astounded.</p> <p>Townsfolk: “Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! Is not this the carpenter, the son of</p>

	Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?” <sup>16</sup> The townsfolk took offense at Him.
Deflected Christology	“Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house.” Jesus was amazed at their incredulity.
Refracted Christology	<i>Ibid.</i> <i>Ibid.</i>
Reflected Christology	The townsfolk took offense at Him.
In rapport with God	Jesus taught with wisdom in the synagogue and healed the sick by laying His hands on them. Indirectly, He point out Himself as a prophet.
Sentiments and thoughts of Jesus	He was amazed (εἰσπαι, mazen) at their incredulity.

The commission of the disciples (6:6b-13) and the return of the disciples (6:30)

Enacted Christology	Jesus went about among the villages teaching. → He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics.
Projected Christology	Narrator: <i>Ibid.</i>
Deflected Christology	“Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.”
Refracted Christology	None
Reflected Christology	They went out and proclaimed that all should repent. They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them. The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told Him all that they had done and taught. (6:30)
In rapport with God	He bestowed His disciples the power over evil spirits.
Sentiments and thoughts of Jesus	Nothing revealed regarding these.

<sup>16</sup> This reaction was not unexpected in a high-context society. Appraisal or derogation based on one’s family background was valid among the ancient Mediterranean people in particular, and among the Asian people in general, even until nowadays. For further studies about the kinship primary value see Bruce J. MALINA, *op. cit.*, 133-137.

### The death of John the Baptist (6:14-29)

Enacted Christology	None.
Projected Christology	Narrator: Jesus' name had become known. Some people: "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him." Others: "It is Elijah." Yet others: "It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." Herod: "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised."
Deflected Christology	None.
Refracted Christology	None.
Reflected Christology	
In rapport with God	He was compared to great prophets.
Sentiments and thoughts of Jesus	None.

### First multiplication of bread (6:31-44)

Enacted Christology	He asked the disciples to go with Him to a secluded place to take a rest for a while, for they didn't even get a chance to eat because of the crowd. → Went with His disciples by boat to a deserted place. → Went ashore, saw a great crowd, and He had compassion for them. → Began to teach them. → When it grew late, he ordered them to get all the people to sit down in groups on the green grass. → He took five bread and two fish, looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to His disciples to set before the people; and He divided the two fish among them all.
Projected Christology	Narrator: <i>Ibid.</i> The disciples: "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now very late; send them away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat."
Deflected Christology	"You give them something to eat." "How many loaves have you? Go and see."
Refracted Christology	"You give them something to eat."
Reflected Christology	The disciples: "Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?" The disciples: "Five, and two fish." And all ate and were filled; and they took up twelve baskets full

	of broken pieces and of the fish.
In rapport with God	He looked up to heaven, blessed and the loaves and fish was multiplied. This act was beyond ordinary human capacity.
Sentiments and thoughts of Jesus	<p>(a) Realizing His disciples being tired and hungry after intensive service to the crowd, He asked them to go to a deserted place to be alone and to rest for a while.</p> <p>(b) Seeing the great crowd, He was moved interiorly (evsplagñi, sqh) for they were like sheep without a shepherd.</p> <p>(c) He gave them not only His teaching, but also food.</p>

Second Journey (postponed) to gentiles' territory; Jesus walked on the water: another display of the disciples' ignorance (6:45-52)

Enacted Christology	Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side (ει̅ν̅ι̅ το̅ πε̅ρα̅), to Bethsaida, while He dismissed the crowd. → After saying farewell to them, He went up on the mountain to pray. → When He saw that they were straining at the oars against an adverse wind, He came towards them early in the morning, walking on the sea. → Then He got into the boat with them.
Projected Christology	Narrator: <i>Ibid.</i> They thought it was a ghost and cried out; for they all saw him and were terrified.
Deflected Christology	“Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.”
Refracted Christology	<i>Ibid.</i>
Reflected Christology	They thought it was a ghost and cried out; for they all saw him and were terrified.  The wind ceased.  The disciples were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.
In rapport with God	He went alone up on the mountain to pray.  His walking on water was extraordinary, making even His disciples terrified. They never expected it.
Sentiments and thoughts of Jesus	Two times the adverb “immediately” (ει̅νω̅ς̅) was attributed to Jesus. (6:45.50). He intended to pass His disciples by (6:48). It seemed Jesus was in a rush. First, in rush to be alone to pray. And second, to calm His disciples down. His intention to pass His disciples also shown that He was eager to arrive first at their planned destination, Bethsaida. However, for an unknown cause they never reached it this time.

The landing at Gennesaret: the healing of multitudes (6:53-56)

Enacted Christology	Landed at Gennesaret. → Got out of the boat.
Projected Christology	Narrator: Wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.
Deflected Christology	None.
Refracted Christology	None.
Reflected Christology	As soon as He got out of the boat, people recognized Him.
In rapport with God	All who touched the fringe of His cloak were healed.
Sentiments and thoughts of Jesus	None.

The heart matters: between the Commandment of God and human-made regulations (7:1-23)

Enacted Christology	Jesus had a dialogue with the Pharisees and some of the scribes regarding (a) observing the tradition of the elders and the most important of all: (b) the Commandment of God. → Called out the crowd. → Taught them about the importance of inner attitude. → To His disciples He explained more.
Projected Christology	Narrator: <i>Ibid.</i> and He declared all foods clean (7:19). <sup>17</sup> The Pharisees and some of the scribes: “Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?” His disciples asked him about the parable.
Deflected Christology	See the red quotes below. To the crowd: “Listen to me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile.” “Then do you also fail to understand? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile, since it enters, not the heart but the stomach, and goes out into the sewer?” “It is what comes out of a person that defiles. For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things

<sup>17</sup> This was one of the straightforward verses in Mark, or even in the whole Bible. Mark as a narrator made a revolutionary interpretation-statement about the purity of every food. This was unheard of. Matthew only cited Jesus’ word without adding any explanation. J. D. G. Dunn in his article marked the seriousness of this claim in relation with the Temple of Jerusalem, thus made Jesus’ reference to “korban” here highly relevant. J. D. G. DUNN, “Jesus and Purity: An Ongoing Debate”, *op. cit.*, 461-465.

	come from within, and they defile a person.”
Refracted Christology	<p>“Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.' You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.”</p> <p>“You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition! For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die.' But you say that if anyone tells father or mother, 'Whatever support you might have had from me is Corban' (that is, an offering to God) then you no longer permit doing anything for a father or mother, thus making void the word of God through your tradition that you have handed on. And you do many things like this.”</p>
Reflected Christology	None.
In rapport with God	Here He spoke clearly about His position regarding the relationship between tradition and the Commandment of God; between inner disposition and action. The Commandment of God should be the principle of every doctrine and action.
Sentiments and thoughts of Jesus	<p>Context-wise, Jesus really meant it when He used the harsh phrases like “hypocrites” and “you have a fine way of rejecting the Commandment of God” in His dialog with the Pharisees and the scribes. The things He said ought to come out directly from His belief and thought.</p> <p>The aorist imperatives “listen” (avkou,sate) and “understand” (su,nete) indicated the importance of what He was about to say.<sup>18</sup> The imperative form of “to listen” (avkou,w) is usually used as a solemn beginning of an important discourse, admonition, or commandment; or just to stress out the gravity of the matter.<sup>19</sup></p> <p>His reply to the disciples (“do you <i>also</i> fail to understand”) implied His disappointment towards them.</p>

### Third Journey to gentiles’ territory: the faith of a Syrophoenician woman (7:24-30)

Enacted Christology	He set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, → At first, He rejected the plea of a Syrophoenician woman, a gentile, to cast the demon out of her daughter. → After listening to her reason, He said to the woman that <b>the demon had left</b> .
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<sup>18</sup> Aorist imperative (and also aorist subjunctive) in Greek refers to an action in the future. Only in the indicative mood the aorist indicates past time.

<sup>19</sup> Just to mention some: Deut 4,1; 5,1; Nm 12,6; 20,10; 1Kg 22,28; Is 34,1; Mk 4,3; Luke 9,44; At 2,22.

Projected Christology	Narrator: <i>Ibid.</i> and that the woman went home, found the child lying on the bed, and <b>the demon gone</b> .  The Syrophoenician woman begged Him to cast the demon out of her daughter.
Deflected Christology	“Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.”  “For saying that, you may go-- the demon has left your daughter.”
Refracted Christology	“Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.”
Reflected Christology	The woman: “Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.”  The woman went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.
In rapport with God	His powerful word could cast away demon from a distance.
Sentiments and thoughts of Jesus	It's difficult to figure out what's in Jesus' mind in this episode. His first reply to the woman was undoubtedly callous. However, His second reply negated the first. He confirmed the statement of the woman: at the end even the dogs might eat the food. <sup>20</sup>

#### Jesus healed a deaf man in the region of the Decapolis (7:31-37)

Enacted Christology	He returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis.  He took the deaf aside in private, away from the crowd, and put His fingers into his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.”  Jesus ordered the crowds to tell no one.
Projected Christology	Narrator: <i>Ibid.</i> and immediately the deaf man's ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly.  The more He ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it.  The crowds were astounded beyond measure, saying, “He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”

<sup>20</sup> In its parallel Mt 15:21-28 the second reply of Jesus was different: “Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.” In Matthew, the motive of Jesus was clearer. He was impressed by the faith of the woman and by that granted her wish. However, the more ‘mysterious’ Jesus in Mark somehow gave away a better impact affirming the fact that even the gentiles could receive the fruit (or in this context, the food) of His ministry.

Deflected Christology	“Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.”
Refracted Christology	None.
Reflected Christology	<p>Immediately the deaf man’s ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly.</p> <p>The more He ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it.</p> <p>The crowds were astounded beyond measure, saying, “He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”</p>
In rapport with God	Jesus’ amazing healing was preceded by His gesture looking up to heaven.
Sentiments and thoughts of Jesus	Jesus healed the deaf man in private and after the man was healed, He asked the people who witnessed the healing not to proclaim it. Popularity wasn’t His aim after all.

Second multiplication of bread (8:1-10)

Enacted Christology	<p><b>He called his disciples telling them He had compassion for the crowd.</b> → After He got the reply from His disciples about the seven loaves they had, He ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground; and He took the seven loaves, and after giving thanks He broke them and gave them to His disciples to distribute; and they distributed them to the crowd. They had also a few small fish; and after blessing them, he ordered that these too should be distributed. → After all were full, He sent them away. → Immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.<sup>21</sup></p>
Projected Christology	<p>Narrator: <i>Ibid.</i></p> <p>The disciples: “How can one feed these people with bread here in the desert?”</p>
Deflected Christology	<p>“I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way-- and some of them have come from a great distance.”</p> <p>“When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?”</p> <p>“And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of</p>

<sup>21</sup> The precise location of “the district of Dalmanutha” was unknown. Edersheim suggested a place at the border of Magadan (aka. Magdala), following the clue from Mt 15:39, and also pointing that the place was probably at the opposite side of the eastern shore of the Lake of Galilee, beyond the district of Decapolis. Of course, it was only a speculation. A. EDERSHEIM, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2, Logos Research Systems, Bellingham (WA) 2003 (1896<sup>1</sup>), 67.

	broken pieces did you collect?”
Refracted Christology	None.
Reflected Christology	The disciples: “ <b>Twelve.</b> ” The disciples: “ <b>Seven.</b> ” They ate and were filled; and they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. Now there were about four thousand people.
In rapport with God	Second multiplication of bread and fish was preceded by Jesus giving thanks.
Sentiments and thoughts of Jesus	Jesus’ word “I have compassion (splagcni,zomai)” had the same root as “evsplagcni,sqh” from the first multiplication (6:34). Jesus was heedful towards the basic needs of the people, not only food, but also a need to have good guidance.

Jesus’ sighed deeply in the spirit over the Pharisees’ incredulity (8:11-13)

Enacted Christology	Jesus sighed deeply in His spirit because of the demand of the Pharisees. → And He left them, and getting into the boat again, He went across to the other side (ei j to. pe,ran).
Projected Christology	The Pharisees came and began to argue with Him, asking Him for a sign from heaven, to test Him.
Deflected Christology	Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to this generation.
Refracted Christology	<i>Ibid.</i>
Reflected Christology	None.
In rapport with God	Jesus was asked to give a sign from heaven, but He did not comply.
Sentiments and thoughts of Jesus	Jesus sighed deeply in His spirit (avnastena,xaj tw   pneu,mati auvtou) and then left the Pharisees for the other side.

Jesus’ grievance over the disciples’ ignorance (8:14-21)

Enacted Christology	Jesus cautioned his disciples about the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod. → Aware of His disciples’ ignorance He complained.
Projected Christology	The disciples: “It is because we have no bread.”
Deflected Christology	“Watch out-- beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod.” “Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes, and fail to see? Do you have ears, and fail to hear?”

	And do you not remember?” → “Do you not yet understand?”
Refracted Christology	<i>Ibid.</i>
Reflected Christology	The disciples: “It is because we have no bread.”
In rapport with God	None.
Sentiments and thoughts of Jesus	The repetition of the similar questions again and again made an impression of profound disappointment on Jesus’ part.

Fourth Journey to gentiles’ territory: Jesus healed a blind man at Bethsaida (8:22-26)

Enacted Christology	<p>Jesus and His disciples came to Bethsaida.</p> <p>He took a blind man by the hand and led him out of the village; and when He had put saliva on his eyes and laid His hands on him, He asked him, “Can you see anything?”</p> <p>Then Jesus laid His hands on the blind man’s eyes again.</p> <p>Then Jesus sent him away to his home saying, “Do not even go into the village.”</p>
Projected Christology	<p>Narrator: Some people brought a blind man to him and begged him to touch him.</p> <p>The blind man looked up and said, “I can see people, but they look like trees, walking.”</p> <p>The man looked intently and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.</p>
Deflected Christology	<p>“Can you see anything?”</p> <p>“Do not even go into the village.”</p>
Refracted Christology	None.
Reflected Christology	None.
In rapport with God	Miraculous healing of a blind man.
Sentiments and thoughts of Jesus	Jesus forbade the man to enter the village for unknown reason.

Peter’s confession (8:27-30)

Enacted Christology	<p>Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way He asked His disciples, “Who do people say that I am?”</p> <p>He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?”</p> <p>He sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about Him.</p>
Projected Christology	The disciples: “John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.”

	Peter: “You are the Messiah.”
Deflected Christology	“Who do people say that I am?” “But who do you say that I am?”
Refracted Christology	None.
Reflected Christology	None.
In rapport with God	Some said He was John the Baptist, others, Elijah, and the others, one of the prophets. Peter admitted He was the Messiah.
Sentiments and thoughts of Jesus	At the end Jesus still sternly ordered the disciples not to tell others about Him.

### RENDERING JESUS’ CHARACTER IN MARK 4:35-8:30

Part-by-part analysis above revealed some facts of Jesus’ character:

1. ***Jesus was a busy man.*** His ministries caused Him (and His disciples) so busy, they sometimes lost moment to eat regularly. Four times in this part of the Gospel the author told us about the situation of food crisis (6:31; 6:38; 8:5; 8:14), that would not have had happened if their schedule hadn’t been too tight. There were senses of rush. The adverb immediately (ευθυ.) appeared twelve times, ten of those related directly or indirectly to Jesus. On their first attempt to go to Bethsaida, walking on the water, He intended to overtake the disciples’ boat, giving away His eagerness to reach it sooner. In this part Mark also marked a lot of places. Jesus and His disciples did travel a lot. Almost each episode marked by change of setting.
2. ***Jesus was a man of His words.*** By the comparison between His actions (enacted theology) and His sayings (deflected and refracted theology), we could say Jesus was a man of actions as well as a man of words. He spoke what’s in His heart or thoughts and He had the capability to do what He said or intended. When he had compassion on something or someone, He did not express it only by words, but also by action. Everything was manifested as He said or intended (cf. 5:35-43; 6:35-44; 7:29-30; etc.). In 7:1-23 He stated the principle of all His works, which was the Commandment of God. This discourse implied strongly that Jesus meant everything He said, that His words came directly from His heart.
3. ***Jesus was heedful and compassionate.*** He was aware not only of things visible, but also of things hidden. He was aware immediately of the woman touching His garment. When there was crisis of food, He offered solution to it. Where there were sicknesses, He cured them. “He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.” (7:37)
4. ***Jesus administered to person as well as to the crowd.*** As busy as He was, Jesus also gave Himself to administer personally to those in needs. He did not hesitate to leave the crowd for Jairus’ daughter. He asked the woman healed from her hemorrhage to meet Him personally. The deaf man and the blind man were healed in private. Personal

- contacts for Him mattered. After a question to His disciples regarding what others said about Him, He asked a personal question, “But who do you say that I am?” (8:29)
5. ***Jesus had high hopes for His disciples, but...*** He sent them to do the things He did Himself and they did succeed. However, subsequently their ignorance about Him or what He said was so disappointing to the brink that Jesus had to express it again and again (4:40; 7:18; 8:14-21). Interestingly, the author Himself made a note of their ignorance as well in 6:52. It is ironic, while Jesus was straightforward in talking and doing things, supposedly leaving no chance of misunderstanding, His own disciples didn’t have what it took to know Him satisfyingly.
  6. ***Jesus didn’t want to take credits from His success.*** What Malbon concluded in her work about Jesus’ focus, which was to do everything God wanted Him to do had been made quite valid in this part. Aside from His own acclaim on the primary of the Commandments of God in 7:1-23, in several occasions Jesus made sure He wanted anything but popularity out of His marvelous deeds (5:43; 7:36; 8:26). The one-time Jesus asked someone to proclaim was in 5:19, and it was, as He said, a work of the Lord out of His mercy.
  7. ***Questions about His concern towards the gentiles.*** Did Mark use the phrase “eiʿj to pe,ran” figuratively to mark Jesus’ change of destination because of the rejection from the Pharisees (8:13) and His townsfolk? While “eiʿj to pe,ran” in 4:35; 5:1; 6:45 and 8:13 did refer to journey towards territories of the gentiles, in 5:21 it had totally contrasted meaning. I would just let this open to discussion. Nevertheless, the exorcisms of the Gerasene man and the daughter of the Syrophenician woman, plus the healings of the deaf man in Decapolis and the blind man in Bethsaida confirmed His openness towards the gentiles. Jesus also set Himself aside from some traditions of His elders, notably regarding the unclean food. Thus, opened His teaching towards more general audience.
  8. ***Jesus was a prophet and the Messiah.*** With the plot and the character developments in Mark 4:35-8:30, the author deductively guided the readers to the first big announcement from the part of the disciples, “You are the Messiah.” Indeed, in this part there wasn’t any big announcement from heaven, but Peter’s confession along with the miraculous events gave away strong impression of who Jesus really was. He did things on level even the greatest of prophets never had achieved. Some already acknowledged Him as a prophet (6:15; 8:28) and Jesus indirectly put Himself among the prophets in the episode of the incredulity of His townsfolk (6:4). Mark didn’t forget to remind us of His other title “Son of (the Most High) God”, too (5:7), anticipating its solemn confirmation.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study the Gospel, limiting only in Mark 4:35-8:30, definitely will not be able to grasp sufficiently the character of Jesus, not to mention to render it completely. Nonetheless, particular analysis, serving as a piece of puzzle, will always be beneficial to at least assist further studies. Referring to Jesus’ question: “But who do you say that I am?”, I believe personal efforts to know Him better always matters. A piece of puzzle, that’s all I get to offer.

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