

INTERACTION BETWEEN JESUS AND THE CHARACTERS IN MARK 4:35–8:30

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Abstract

Upaya menemukan teologi biblis yang relevan dengan zaman ini sangat penting. Studi tentang karakter-karakter dalam Mrk 4:35–8:30 ini merupakan salah satu upaya tersebut. Analisis naratif dalam studi Kitab Suci, dengan fokus pada analisis karakter, tidak sulit untuk diarahkan pada refleksi teologis yang relevan. Proses identifikasi pembaca dengan tokoh-tokoh dalam Kitab Suci pada umumnya dapat dilakukan dengan lancar, seperti yang ditunjukkan dalam artikel ini. Metode analisis karakter dengan kategorisasi berdasarkan jenis dan sifat dalam artikel ini, selain memperjelas posisi para karakter, juga mempertegas pengenalan akan karakter utama dalam Injil Markus, yakni Yesus. Interaksi mereka dengan Yesus, baik secara langsung maupun tidak langsung, pada akhirnya menuntun para pembaca untuk menentukan sikap dalam interaksi pribadi dengan Yesus.

Keywords

interaction, character, characterization, narrative analysis, discipleship, biblical relationship.

The focus and attention Jesus received in Mark was huge, setting aside many elements necessary to build an in-depth analysis on the other characters. They just circled around Jesus, reacted to what He did and said. Jesus was the main character in Mark. The others had only supporting roles. His name, “Ihsou/j” and all its derivations appeared 82 times. The two next personal names that appeared most were the two apostles, Simon and Jacob, brother of John. Each of them only appeared 11 times. The disciples of Jesus were mentioned as a group 39 times. Another important groups in Mark were adversaries of Jesus. They were mentioned quite frequently: the scribes (grammateuj) appeared 21 times and the Pharisees (Farisai/oj), 12 times.

Aside of Jesus as the main character, Mark mentioned a lot these two groups: the disciples and Jesus’ adversaries. In Mark 4:35–8:30, however, there were some other characters needed to be mentioned. Apart from the ordinary major characters, Mark gave a portion of his story telling the readers about the fate of John the Baptist in the hand of Herod (Antipas). This story of John the Baptist was the one of the rare events in the whole Gospel of Mark where Jesus was not in it. The other episodes were the introduction of John the Baptist (1:4–8), the conspiracy to assassinate Jesus (14:1-2), Judas Iscariot meeting the head priests (14:10-11), and Peter’s denial (14:66-72). However, even in these later episodes Jesus isn’t rule out of scene. The episode of the death of John the Baptist would also become an event confirming the primary of Jesus, as we will see soon.

Apart from the major characters, there were several minor characters in Mark as well. Scholars like Williams and Malbon imposed the importance of the minor characters in Mark.¹

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¹ J. F. WILLIAMS, “Other Followers of Jesus, Minor Characters as Major Figures in Mark’s Gospel”, in *JSOTSup*

To have a good look at the Gospel of Mark, one should not rule out them. Here is the list of some minor characters in Mark 4:35–8:30: Legion and the possessed Gerasene man (5:1-20), Jairus and his daughter (5:21-24.35-43), the woman afflicted with hemorrhages (5:25-34), Jesus’ townsfolk (6:1-6a), Herod and his household (6:14-28), the disciples of John the Baptist (6:29), the Syrophoenician woman (7:24-30), the deaf-mute man (7:31-37), the blind man at Bethsaida (8:22-26), and of course, the crowd.

CATEGORIZING THE CHARACTERS IN MARK 4:35–8:30

Role-wise there are basically three types of characters in a story: (1) *protagonist*: the main character of the story, (2) *antagonist*: one or more people who oppose the protagonist and (3) *foils*: those who provide contrast to the protagonist, making him/her seem better. There can be two types of foils. First, those oppose the main character, usually in obvious unsympathetic manners, raising possibility for the readers to take the hero side. Second, the foils can be those with similar virtues and qualities, but not as “good” as the main character, so that the hero appears even better. This list seems incomplete. Frequently there are minor characters that support the main character more actively and responsively. Let’s call them (4) *allies*. To make a complete list of characters do not forget about the neutral-passerby or crowd with no spoken lines, the (5) *figurants*.

By frequency of appearance, usually we can distinguish (1) major characters from (2) minor characters. However, it didn’t exactly work that way in the Gospel of Mark. God was one of the most important characters in the Gospel, despite His rare appearance. Another way to tell apart major characters from minor characters is by measuring their performances: (1) round or flat; (2) dynamic or static.

Round	Flat	Dynamic	Static
Have depth	Thin	Ever-changing ²	Stagnant
Coherent	Tedious	Influential	Trifling
Appropriate	2 dimensional	Visionary	Inert
Seems real		Appealing	Stereotypical

With all the categories above some deductions can be made. Basically, those with more possibilities of development were to be the major characters. They will have more influential in the story. However, their dynamic nature makes them unpredictable, too. In this sense, the main character is the most imbalance character of all. Next to the main character are the other major characters. Their roles in the story may not be fixated. Great stories usually played on the unlimited possibilities of twisting the major characters. Betrayals and conversions are good spices. Good authors will know how to use them, in a fine and appropriate portion, of course.

102 (1994). E. S. MALBON, *In the Company of Jesus, Characters in Mark’s Gospel*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville (KY) 2000, 189-225.

² Or in Aristotle’s term: “consistently inconsistent”, (*Poetics*, XV,1).

Protagonist	Usually round and dynamic. Good books or movies should always have a strong main character: round and dynamic.
Antagonist(s)	Usually round and dynamic. Depend on the purpose of the author, can be flat and static.
Foils	Usually flat and static. With plot-twist can be round and dynamic.
Allies	Usually flat and static. With plot-twist can be round and dynamic.
Figurants	Usually flat and static. Some silent appearances in good books ³ and movies can create deep impression, though.

Back to our text, below is a chart categorizing the characters of Mark 4:34–8:30. The far-right column contains my proposals. Reasons of the proposals will be given in the analysis of the respective characters.

	Round	Flat	Dynamic	Static	Proposed Roles
Jesus	✓		✓		Protagonist
The Disciples	✓		✓		Allies and foils
Pharisees and Scribes	✓		✓		Antagonists & foils
Legion	✓			✓	Allies
Possessed Gerasene		✓		✓	Ally
Jairus		✓		✓	Ally
Woman with Hemorrhage	✓			✓	Ally
Jairus' Daughter		✓		✓	Figurant
Jesus' Townsfolk		✓		✓	Foils
John the Baptist	✓		✓		Foil
Herod and His Household	✓		✓		Antagonists & foils of foil
Disciples of John the Bapt.		✓		✓	Figurants and foils
Syrophoenician Woman	✓		✓		Ally
Deaf-Mute Man		✓		✓	Ally
Blind Man at Bethsaida		✓		✓	Ally
Crowd	✓		✓		Figurants and allies

CHARACTERS ANALYSIS

After putting each character in their respective category, it is time to analyze them one by one. I will start with more focus on the disciples. Subsequently, the analysis of the other characters will come after that. The minor characters in Mark stood out for themselves.

³ With strong descriptions from the author, figurant(s) can be a lot more compelling than a mere passerby.

The Disciples

The disciples served not only as supporting characters of Mark. In Chapter I, the plot analysis revealed that the disciples were being prepared to succeed Jesus. They were next in charge. Malbon even denoted the discipleship as the central theme in Mark.⁴ However, no matter how important that theme was, it only came after the choice to believe in Jesus as Messiah and the Son of God. Choosing to believe comes first, and then there is another choice to follow Him to the cross. The second depends on the first. Although the first also has progressive sense, the second in its own nature is a progressive choice.

Deep into the story the readers were being guided to know more about the disciples, about their struggles and progress. Their ignorance towards Jesus also created deep impression to gratify later the true nature of Jesus' Messiahship. In this sense, the disciples would eventually turn out to be great foils. Our text in 6:6b-13.30 anticipated it. In this part of Mark, we still couldn't see any clue of their betrayals later in the story. Nevertheless, the tension created by their ignorance and Jesus' grievance towards it would only escalate.

When Aristotle talked about imitation, he meant the effort of the authors to make their plot and characters alive by imitating events and people, in their imagination or in actual life.⁵ However, as I mentioned in Introduction, it is not unusual to have it the other way around, when a character in a story, fiction or not, influences the readers in their actual life. Children can be easily influenced by their favorite characters from books or movies. It isn't rare to see them imitating their heroes.

Strong characters can leave deep impression influencing children and adults alike. In the Gospel of Mark, the character of Jesus was strong indeed. Jesus in Mark radiated charisma attracting people to Him. He rarely had moment to be alone. Almost all the time He was surrounded by crowd or by His disciples. He was a man to follow. However, to imitate Him in complete sense somehow seems out-of-range. Of course, there are some 'imitable' qualities of Jesus, such as His compassion and heedfulness, yet to imitate Him completely – or even near to that – is on a different level. We need a steppingstone, a ladder, a bridge, or in-between character(s) to approach and imitate the ultimate character. For this reason, the disciples come in hand. Their characters in Mark were far from decent. As luck would have it, that's what made them believable, too. Eventually, it would be easier for the readers to put in the shoes of the disciples. In this context, the future of Christian discipleship does seem bright enough.

Pharisees and Scribes

The Pharisees and the scribes might only make small appearances in this part of the Gospel; nevertheless, they left strong impression and influence. Their role in this part was indispensable for the plot development. Story-wise, without them the Gospel of Mark would be stagnant. Their appearances were always interesting, putting the story into the next level of thrill. They were indeed the main antagonists of the story.

To know better about their roles in the story, some background checking are necessary, especially that of the Pharisees. In the massive *Encyclopedia of Judaism*, L. L. Grabbe put the Pharisee sect among the minority movements with small influence towards Jewish society in general. Quoting the work of Josephus (a Pharisee himself), he argued that the sect only had had about six thousand members. Furthermore, Grabbe did some searching into some sources

⁴ E. S. MALBON, *op. cit.*, 41.

⁵ *Poetics*, V,1; VI; VII,2; VIII,1-2; X,1.

to find that the Pharisees had done several approaches to gain more influence but failed.⁶ Grabbe's analysis seemed to ignore Jeremias' earlier claim. According to Jeremias, while the leaders and influential members of the society, especially before the rebellion in 66 AD, might have been the scribes, only a handful of them became priest. On a contrary, a great number of Pharisees, gained influences through their position as priests.⁷

Cohen explained that the priesthood of the Pharisees needed to be differentiated from the Arronic priesthood, which was hereditary. The Pharisees was known as the priests responsible for teaching. Their particular role led the people to start call them "Rabbi". After the destruction of the Second Temple of Jerusalem (70 AD), the position of the Pharisees as the guardians of Law became more significant and influential. Ruptured from their Temple and sovereignty, the Jews sought out the last barrier of their ancestral identity, the Law. Thus, began an age of a class in the society beyond the Temple and the inherited office of priesthood. Ironically for the Pharisees, their influence as Rabbi of the society became too publicly accepted their existence as a sect was slowly fused into the society. With that the Jewish sectarianism also came to an end.⁸

If the claim of Jeremias and Cohen above regarding the role of the Pharisees were true,⁹ it wouldn't be odd then if the Pharisees argued intensely with Jesus regarding the tradition of Elders in the context of rites and offering. They needed to be vanguards of tradition. While there was absolutely nothing wrong with their task, what troubled Jesus was their inner motive. Their drive to uphold the visible and distinguished identity through the practices of Law might lead them to be conceited. Perhaps this drive was what Jesus meant by "the yeast of the Pharisees" in 8:15.

Legion

Plot-wise, this episode didn't put the evil spirits as adversaries of Jesus. It was completely the other way around. They came to Jesus running and then admitted that He was the Son of the Most High God. They surrendered to His command and left the man. In this sense they were allies of Jesus.

The Possessed Gerasene

Having liberated from demons, he wanted to follow Jesus. However, Jesus had another plan for him. He was asked to proclaim the event. It was the only time in Mark that Jesus asked someone to proclaim a healing, but He made sure the credit went to the Lord.

⁶ L. L. GRABBE, "Judaism, History of, Part II, Second Temple Times (586 B.C.E.-70 C.E.)", in J. NEUSNER, A. J. AVERY-PECK, and W. S. GREEN (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Judaism*, Volume 2, second edition, Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden 2005, 1309.

⁷ J. JEREMIAS, *Jerusalen en tiempos de Jesus, estudio economic y social del mundo del Nuevo Testamento*, Ediciones Cristiandad, Madrid 1977, 269-271

⁸ S. J. D. COHEN, "The Significance of Yavneh: Pharisees, Rabbis, and the End of Jewish Sectarianism", in *HUCA* 55 (1984), 27-34.

⁹ According to Meyer, due to the limited sources describing the first-century Pharisees, the theory of Jeremias cannot be challenged appropriately. However, his analysis and in-depth studies of the available historical sources was remarkable and had long-lasting influences over scholars after him. J. P. MEYER, "The Quest for Historical Pharisees: A Review Essay on Roland Deines, *Die Pharisaer*", in *CBQ* 61 (1999), 720.

Jairus

Jairus believed in Jesus. There was no indication about him losing his faith, even though his family tried to sway him by telling that his daughter was already passed away. With this he was a faithful ally of Jesus.

Woman with Hemorrhage

Although the story was short, Mark's description of the woman was remarkable. She was easily one of the most engaging characters in the Gospel, believable and unforgettable. With only a few words Mark vividly described the poor condition of the woman, making the readers immediately aware of her misery. She had three levels of affliction: having sick for many years, she got poor because of medical bills, and now her sickness was getting worse. With great hope and faith, but clearly with not enough courage, she came to touch the garment of Jesus and was healed immediately. Her character became even clearer when she decided to fight her fear and fell before Jesus, honestly telling Him everything. There ought to be a lot of emotions working back to back within her as the story progressed: pain, desperation, hope, faith, excitement, anxiety, marveled, joy, fear, courage, trust, and gratefulness. Her story is relevant even for today. Surely, the readers can learn a lot from her.

Jairus' Daughter

There is nothing to say about her character. She was a complete figurant without any line or action to be analyzed. We only know that she was twelve years old and died. Mark didn't even reveal her reaction after being resurrected. However, through her Jesus' fame was elevated to a whole new level as He who raised someone from death.

Jesus' Townsfolk

Influenced by presumption having read the much more intense Luke's version of this episode (Lk 4:16-30), at first, I saw Jesus' hometown people as potent adversaries. However, there wasn't any sign of violence towards Jesus in Mark's version. They only refused to believe in Jesus because they were disappointed by Jesus' run of the mill background. Although judgment based on someone's background, as conveyed by Malina,¹⁰ was not uncommon in Mediterranean society, their prejudice would easily make readers taking the side of Jesus. They served as good foils for Jesus' sake.

John the Baptist

Speaking of foils, perhaps nobody else matches the definition as perfect as Mark's John the Baptist for Jesus. Looking at Jesus' character, it seems that there are many similarities can be found in the character of John the Baptist. The similarities that made some people equalized Jesus to him (5:16; 8:28).

¹⁰ B. J. MALINA, "Dealing with Biblical (Mediterranean) Characters: A Guide for U.S. Consumers", in *BTB* 19 (1989), 127-128.

JESUS	JOHN THE BAPTIST
Jesus was a busy man.	What do you think of a man who baptized people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem (1:5)?
Jesus was a man of His words.	Well, John the Baptist was incarcerated because of his words (6:18).
Jesus was heedful and compassionate.	John the Baptist got mingled in other's family affair definitely not because he liked to stick his nose around it.
Jesus administered to person as well as to the crowd.	(1) Baptism was something out of personal conversion to begin with. (2) Most probably he criticized Herod out of his personal concern.
Jesus didn't want to take credit from his success.	His famous statements in 1:7-8 was one of the epitome expressions of humility.
Jesus was a prophet and Messiah.	He was mentioned among the prophets in 5:14-16 and 8:28. Many regarded him as truly a prophet (11:32).
Jesus was a human (to follow).	John had disciples as well.

In Mark, Jesus was similar to John the Baptist, yet surpassed him in many ways. While there wasn't clear if John in 1:7-8 was referring to Jesus, the way Mark put the episode of the baptism of Jesus where the Spirit descending like a dove upon Him might be an indirect confirmation of the reference. Whether John the Baptist himself admitted the superiority of Jesus or not, in the Gospel of Mark the superior one was clear. The wonders Jesus accomplished placed Him in category of prophets greater than John. The story of the death of John the Baptist was placed awkwardly intercalated between the beginning of the mission of the disciples of Jesus and its ending. As the theory of the intercalation goes, perhaps it was supposed to emphasize the superiority of Jesus and His disciples in comparison with John and his.¹¹

The death of John the Baptist had allusive reference to that of Jesus in many ways. John was captured because of his strong criticism against his adversaries (6:17-19), in this case Herod and Herodias, just like Jesus would be caught because of His different teachings provoking His adversaries. Herod admitted that John was a just and holy man (6:20) same as Pilate would find out the innocence of Jesus. John the Baptist was sentenced to death unjustly (6:24-28). The same fate awaited Jesus. The disciples of John buried him (6:29). Jesus would be buried also by His followers. However, John stayed buried. Jesus would rise.

Herod and His Household

They served as antagonists and foils of Jesus' foil, John the Baptist. What a disturbed family displayed by Mark! Herod's twisted personality made him hated while at the same time

¹¹ Intercalation, according to Scott G. Brown, is "a means of conspicuously juxtaposing two episodes or pericopae". In Mark the technique of intercalation was used quite frequently. At least there were six generally recognized intercalations in 3:20-35; 5:21-43; 6:7-32; 11:12-25; 14:1-11; and 14:53-72. S. G. BROWN, "Mark 11:1-12:12: A Triple Intercalation?", in *CBQ* 64 (2002), 78.

adored John the Baptist. With her deep hatred towards John the Baptist, Herodias never lost her intention to kill him. And the daughter, Mark revealed her excitement because of her mother's demand, the head of John the Baptist. She immediately (ευϋου.ι) rushed back to Herod and requested, "I want you to give me at once (ευϋαυθ/ι) the head of John the Baptist on a platter." What a creative way to request an execution of a man. These deviated characters must have inspired a lot of authors and movie directors.

In Luke, the Pharisees warned Jesus about Herod who was going to kill Him (13:31). Jesus replied calling Herod "fox" and convinced the Pharisees that a prophet should be killed only in Jerusalem. This is the only account stating the aggressiveness of Herod (Antipas) towards Jesus. Luke was the only one who mentioned Jesus' encounter with Herod (Lk 23:7-12). In Matthew and Mark, they never met each other. Thus, it wasn't clear what Jesus meant by "the yeast of Herod" in Mk 8:15.

Gould proposed yeast of Herod as an allusion to worldliness, with strange reference to his proselytism.¹² According to Marcus, leaven in rabbinic text was associated with the Evil Inclination.¹³ Here it wouldn't difficult to deduce that by saying "the yeast of Herod", Jesus meant something bad, something to be aware of. Marcus concluded saying the yeast here had to do with the unleavened bread of Passover. Yeast here was to be seen as everything that would contaminate the Passover of Jesus, everything that would stand in His way to fulfill His mission. This interpretation befits the overall theme of the mission of Son of Man in Mark and Luke's theme of Jerusalem. If we were to synthesize, perhaps the yeast of Pharisees was more an allusion to inner obstacles to follow Jesus to the cross, while the yeast of Herod referred to physical obstacles such as political pressure and persecution. The disciples need to be aware of both obstacles.

Disciples of John the Baptist

As mentioned above, most likely the disciples of John the Baptist were utilized to be foils for Jesus' disciples. No accounts were found about their final fate, except that some of them eventually would start to follow Jesus instead (John 1:37; cf. John 10:40-42). Acts 18:24-9:11 reported some people who had received the baptism of John and then gave themselves to be baptized in the name of Jesus. By these accounts, probably a lot of John's followers would get assimilated into the Christian community later.

Syrophoenician Woman

Another great character. She heard about Jesus and with great conviction she asked Jesus to liberate her daughter from evil spirit. It was unlikely that she knew what reply Jesus would give beforehand. However, hearing that she didn't lose her composure and spontaneously yet convincingly she responded with such a perfect answer. While, she was an eminent model of unwavering faith, her love for her daughter might be her best quality.

Deaf-Mute Man of Decapolis and Blind Man at Bethsaida

¹² E. P. GOULD, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark*, C. Scribner's Sons, New York (NY) 1992, 146. See also R. L. COOPER, *Mark. Holman New Testament Commentary, Holman Reference*, Volume 2, Broadman & Holman Publishers, Nashville (TN), 2000, 133.

¹³ J. MARCUS, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Volume 2, Yale University Press, London 2008, 507.

Their characters were not developed enough to be analyzed. They served as allies to Jesus, further reinforced His image as a prophet. These two episodes were exclusively Mark's. In context of 4:12 and the episode of Peter's confession (8:27-30), probably these two events were allusions to deafness and blindness of heart. Only after the cure of deafness and blindness of heart, one could arrive at conviction that Jesus is Messiah.

Crowd

In Mark there are four words that can be translated into "crowd/many/multitude":¹⁴ *polu,j* (2:2; 2:15b; 9:26b; 10:48; 15:41), *pa,j* (1:27.32; 2:12; 5:20; 12:43.44a), the rare *plh/qoj* (3:7.8), and the most common *o;cloj* (2:4; 2:13; 5:24.27.30.31; 7:33; 9:14.15.19.25; 12:41). Their roles in Mark cannot be simply generalized. First, there were different from disciples or adversaries. Two, their nature was in their name: crowd/many/multitude; a group of persons, each with their own will, intention, intelligence, ability, moral quality, social background, way of thinking, education, et cetera. Forget about simple, they are impossible to be generalized. That's why strictly contextual analysis should be applied to classify their roles.

List of "crowds" in Mark 4:35–8:30

Verse	Crowd	Translation	Role
4:36	to.n o;clon	the crowd	Figurants
5:20	pa,ntej	all/everyone	Figurants
5:21	o;cloj polu,j	a great crowd	Figurants
5:24	o;cloj polu,j	a great crowd	Figurants
5:27	evn tw o;clw	in the crowd	Figurants
5:30	evn tw o;clw	in the crowd	Figurants
5:31	to.n o;clon	the crowd	Figurants
6:2	polloi	many	Foils
6:31	polloi	many	Figurants
6:33	polloi	many	Figurants
6:34	polu.n o;clon	a great crowd	Figurants
6:39	pa,ntaj	all	Figurants
6:41	pa/sin	all	Figurants
6:42	pa,ntej	all	Figurants
6:45	to.n o;clon	the crowd	Figurants
7:14	to.n o;clon; pa,ntej	the crowd; all	Figurants
7:17	avpo. tou/o;clou	from the crowd	Figurants
7:33	avpo. tou/o;clou	from the crowd	Allies

¹⁴ I'm not giving the whole verses where the words appear. For complete list see E. S. MALBON, *op. cit.*, 229-232.

8:1	pollou/ o;clou	a great crowd	Figurants
8:2	evpi to.n o;clon	for the crowd	Figurants
8:6	tw o;clw	the crowd	Figurants

From the list there are only two particularities: 6:2 and 7:33. The “*polloi*” in 6:2 refers to Jesus’ townsfolk which has been discussed. It leaves 7:33, the only “crowd” in this part with line: “He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.” (7:37) This statement of them made them an ally of Jesus.

SOME CONCLUSIONS

1. The study of other characters aside from Jesus is significant, especially, when it concerns the allies of Jesus. Apart from Jesus’ disciples, Mark’s descriptions of some minor characters were truly remarkable. Particularly, the characterizations of the woman with hemorrhage, the Herod’s household, and the Syrophoenician woman were outstanding concerning how few words were being used. From their interactions with Jesus, a lot of theological and anthropological reflections can be made.
2. The disciples in Mark 4:35–8:30 had their own place in story plot. One of the main themes in Mark is discipleship. In the text, discipleship in Mark ultimately is active and progressive responses to Jesus’ calling to follow Him; progressive in a painful sense. The disciples’ ignorance served as foils to Jesus’ emergence as lone hero of the story. Only due to their painful experiences, the disciples will gradually learn to imitate Jesus to the cross.
3. Character-wise, the disciples’ ‘weaknesses’ make them more believable, thus, easier to be made examples and role-models.
4. Another relevant role-model is the Syrophoenician woman. Readers with problems in life can learn to cope with their sufferings by reflecting her interaction with Jesus.
5. Despite sharing some resemblances to Jesus, John the Baptist in Mark was not the same as Jesus. His life, ministry and death served as foils to those of Jesus.
6. On the other hand, the study of the adversaries will help readers to understand more about the reasons of conflicts and ultimately comprehend the necessity of the cross.
7. All in all, the familiarity with the characters will help readers to engage themselves deeper in the story and, more importantly, to learn how to relate themselves personally to Jesus.

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