

## Gathered Around Absence: A First-Century Approach to the Text Known as “Mark”

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### *Ballot Items*

The writing we now call the gospel of Mark did not exist as such in the first two centuries of the common era. A written object that became Mark *did* matter in this period, however, as a material object, and as a source of authority for and within Jesus groups. This object was an intentional textual production, but not a “book.”

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The rendering of Jesus stories as text established a means of memorialization for a group or groups responding to a situation of absence. In the first two centuries, textualized stories about Jesus were meaningful as experiential opportunity for memorialization, as a mechanism for expected and effective remembrance.

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The writing we now know as the gospel of Mark should be read as a *hypomnēma*, a socio-cultural memorial or means for remembrance of the dead very common in the first two centuries. This memorialization allows for the continuing functionality of a Jesus group or association.

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The writing now known as Mark enabled a Jesus group gathered around an absent body, a group potentially experiencing its own pain and trauma, to establish a reading culture of witness-response.

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