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# Isaiah in Mark

## Lesson 13

### “Mark 15”

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**Objective:** To understand how Isaiah is used by Mark to proclaim the good news to his original audience and to understand how this should be understood by us today. How should the gospel message impact our lives. The historical and cultural barriers often cause us to miss, or even misinterpret the message of Mark. This then inhibits transformation into the image of Christ.

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**Materials:** Books, Journal articles, Targums, the Syriac Peshitta and interviews.

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**Procedures:** To outline the issues that confront us as we seek to comprehend more fully the powerful ways that the Old Testament, and in particular Isaiah challenged and transformed the world-view and the lives of first century believers. In doing this, it is hoped that we can then transform that understanding into a contextual milieu that will allow our lives to be impacted by the Gospel in the powerful, transformative way that it impacted that first audience.

Mark's account of the suffering, death and resurrection in chapters 14-16 is permeated with Old Testament citations and allusions. This use of allusions and citations happens, in this section, to an extent that is unparalleled in the rest of Mark's narrative. This frequency of citation and allusion reflects the primitive Christian conviction that Christ died and was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Only one citation, Mark 14:27, is introduced with a quotation formula (ὅτι γέγραπται) "for it has been written." In two other instances 14:21 and 14:49, there are references to the fulfillment of scripture without giving any specifics as to which scriptures. The remainder of the scriptural echoes are citations, or allusions to Old Testament passages without any indication of quotation, or allusion. Their identification is left to the reader's knowledge of scripture and also the reader's ability to relate those scriptures to the narrative of Mark.<sup>1</sup>

In this section of Mark (14-16), there are primarily four parts of the Old Testament that play a decisive role in Mark's narrative: Zechariah 9-14; Daniel 7; the Psalms of the Righteous Sufferer; and

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<sup>1</sup> Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord* Louisville KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), p. 153.

the Servant Songs of Isaiah, especially Isaiah 53. The influence of Zechariah 9-14 and Daniel 7 seems to be limited to relatively small sections of Mark's account of the passion of Christ, while the influence of the Righteous Sufferer Psalms and the Suffering Servant Songs of Isaiah, extends throughout the account. Certainly within the passion narrative the Psalms of the Righteous Sufferer are the most pervasive.<sup>2</sup> By the time we come to chapter 15, we find Jesus in the midst of the Jews who are trying to have him executed. They had already had his trial, the night before, and they have already decided that he is guilty and deserves death, but the power of capital punishment was something they did not have the legal authority to undertake on their own.

Mark 15 opens on the morning after Jesus was captured and tried by the Jews with Jesus being bound and handed over to Pontius Pilate. He was the fifth Roman governor of Judea. We have extensive information regarding his tenure as the Roman governor, but we are totally in the dark regarding his life before, and after his Judaeian governorship. The year of his appointment as governor is commonly

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<sup>2</sup> Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, pp. 153, 172.

given as 26, or 27 A. D. Valerius Gratus was governor of Judea before Pontius Pilate: he was appointed in 14 A. D. and served for eleven years before being replaced by Pontius Pilate. Pilate served until March of 37 A. D.<sup>3</sup> Pilate governed the minor province of Judea under the supervision of the legate of the Imperial province of Syria. He normally resided at Caesarea Maritima, but he dwelt in Jerusalem during the festivals.<sup>4</sup>

As we begin our examination of Mark, we see in 15:1 a consultation (συμβούλιον) held with the chief priests, elders, scribes, and the whole council. Those who governed Israel made the decision that Jesus deserved to die, and as previously noted, lacking that authority they seek to get this done with the aid of Pontius Pilate. At verse 2, we are told that Pilate asks Jesus if he is the “king of the Jews.” It appears that this must have been the basis of the charge that was brought to Pilate in order to get the sentence they wanted. The Jewish leaders will have been aware of the Roman disdain for kings and also of their fear of insurrection by those claiming to follow

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<sup>3</sup> Daniel R. Schwartz, “Pontius Pilate,” in David Noel Freedman, ed. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 5 (New York NY: Doubleday, 1992), pp.395-401.

<sup>4</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, In The New International Greek Testament Commentary series (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), p. 625.

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a king. Pilate asks Jesus if indeed he is king of the Jews. Jesus neither agrees nor denies the charge. The stage is being set for the message that Mark seeks to communicate to his readers. At verse 3, we are told that the chief priest accused him of many things. Once again at verse 4, Pilate questions Jesus seeking a response. As the chief judicial officer of this region he appears to seek at least to give a semblance of justice and good order in what he does. We are told that Jesus made no further reply to Pilate and then something unusual, we are told that Pilate was “amazed” (θαυμάζειν).

As in earlier passages in Mark (e.g. 1:16-20; 2:13-14; 8:14-21), Jesus refuses to give an explanation for his deeds and words, and yet people still find themselves drawn to and even overwhelmed by Jesus. This is a testimony to the divine power which is at work in Jesus even as he draws near to his death. The impression of divine power being at work in Jesus is reinforced by the narrative’s echo here, and in 15:44, of the famous scriptural prophecy from Isaiah regarding the Lord’s Suffering Servant who is silent before his accusers (Isaiah 53:7). Pilate represents the nations that are spoken of in Isaiah 52:15 (Septuagint) and the response of Pilate is the

response of the nations given in that prophecy, “amazement” (θαυμάσονται). This Isaian echo deepens the perspective in Mark’s Gospel of a paradoxical reversal of appearances: instead of being defeated by the authorities of the world, those who presume to judge Jesus; the bound, and seemingly powerless Jesus, continues to advance the kingdom of God toward victory.<sup>5</sup>

One of the questions we likely have today is why is Mark highlighting the links with ancient prophecies? One of the things we need to be aware of is that crucifixion was a familiar form of execution in ancient Palestine. After the siege of Tyre in the 4th century B. C., Alexander the Great lined the shore with 2,000 crosses (Quintus Curtius, *History of Alexander* 4.4.17), and Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 B. C.) crucified 800 Pharisees (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 13.380; *Jewish Wars* 1.97). The challenge for Mark was how could he convey the special significance of the crucifixion of Jesus, as opposed to all those other crucifixions? How could he convey that this death, of all the thousands that had occurred was

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<sup>5</sup> Joel Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, in *The Anchor Yale Bible*, Vol. 27A (New Haven CT: The Anchor Yale Bible, 2009), p. 1035.

different, special, divinely ordained? Since Mark was not writing an essay, or a letter he could not simply explain this, instead he had to make this understood within the context of his account of the life of Jesus.<sup>6</sup> As we continue our examination of Mark we need to emphasize that this is a major motivation for him in his Gospel. He is telling the story of the Messiah and telling it in such a way as to connect the details powerfully and succinctly with the prophecies of God that had been delivered many hundreds of years earlier. His task is a divine mission.

In telling the story in this way, Mark is connecting the ministry, and life, of Jesus powerfully in such a way as to demonstrate its unique nature. This is not just another death, this is something extraordinary and special. This is something that changes everything, it changes the very fabric of the universe, and more importantly for the audience of this Gospel it changes life itself. The message of this Gospel calls for faith beyond what we can see, feel, taste and touch. It calls on those who are not blind and deaf to recognize in Jesus the hand of God, more than that, the son of God. It calls for an end to

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<sup>6</sup> R. Alan Culpepper, *Mark*, in the Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary series (Macon GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2007) p. 537.

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the blindness and deafness so that those who are no longer blind and deaf might confidently, passionately and fearlessly live life differently. The message of Mark is not one of earthly blessing and physical protection. Such a perspective was what the nations sought, what Rome offered, whereas the message of this Gospel is that all of that is a lie, and Jesus, through his life, death, and resurrection would prove that. Mark tells this entire story set against the backdrop of these ancient prophecies that were intended to open the eyes and the hearts of those to whom the message was revealed.

The action in Mark chapter 15, in light of this, unfolds in three parts, with the burial of Jesus acting as a form of epilogue. In the first two parts, it is mockery that is used while in the third part we find the climactic confession which has been the goal of the telling of this Gospel from the moment it began. As we examine the text closer we are able to see the irony in the fact that everything that is said to, or about, Jesus in mockery is actually true. He was the king of the Jews (15:18), he would destroy the temple and rebuild it (metaphorically) in three days (15:29), and he had saved others, and yet it is for that very reason that he could not save himself (15:31). The words that



Jesus spoke from the cross are also revealing; those haunting and often for us puzzling words of “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me (15:34 ὁ θεός μου ὁ θεός μου, εἰς τί ἐγκατέλιπές με). Additionally, all the things that happened to Jesus while he was on the cross were significant: the charge against him (15:26), the darkness right at the pinnacle of the sun’s height (15:33), the misunderstanding of the cry of Jesus on the cross (15:35), the sour wine (15:36), and the ripping of the temple veil (15:38).<sup>7</sup>

All of these details merit our closest attention and many of these details are a demonstration to the readers that the scriptures were fulfilled in Jesus. The death of Jesus is theologically the heart of Mark’s Gospel. It is carefully written, and therefore it calls for us to take great care and give the closest attention possible to the text.<sup>8</sup> As we return to 15:5 we need to see that the word used there for Pilate’s amazement is the same word used in the Old Greek translation of Isaiah 52:15. For those who read and understood Greek this fine detail would have been far more obvious than it is to us today. Today, we have to rely on commentaries for the most part

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<sup>7</sup> R. Alan Culpepper, *Mark*, pp. 537-538.


<sup>8</sup> R. Alan Culpepper, *Mark*, p. 538.

as most people today are not able to read the original text, in Greek. We need to continue to remember that the Bible of the early church was written in Greek, the Old Testament (the New Testament would not be completed until near the end of the first century A. D.).

As we move onto 15:6, the stage is set for the next important detail as we are told about the tradition of releasing a prisoner. In this narrative we are also introduced to a man named Barabbas. Unlike so many of our names today, which do not focus on the meaning of the words, in antiquity, the meaning of names was of crucial importance and it is highly improbable that the first audience of Mark's Gospel will not have been aware of the meaning of *Barabbas*. The name *Barabbas* can mean "son of a teacher" (*rabban*), "son of a man named Abba," or "son of the father." There is no doubt that Mark's readers will have seen the irony of the crowd crying out for the "son of the Father" rather than for Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>9</sup> The irony here once again connects the story that Mark is telling back to God in a powerful way that raises high the sense of tragedy and plays heavily off of one of the favorite phrases

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<sup>9</sup> R. Alan Culpepper, *Mark*, p. 542.



of Isaiah, and Jesus, indicating the blindness and deafness, the failure to comprehend of the audience. This lack of comprehension was not unique to the Jews of the day of Jesus and in the Gospel of Mark it acts as a compelling cry for us to take great care that our actions are not motivated by our blindness, our failure to comprehend the message of the Gospel.

There is no doubt that the message of the Gospel continues to challenge us and confound us today. How can the creator of the universe, who has power beyond our simple imaginations allow injustice to happen. One of the challenges of the Gospel of Mark is to force us to come to the realization that we are not the arbiters of justice. We cannot even fully comprehend justice because of our limited understanding. In this, if true justice were delivered none of us could stand and so God chooses to come to us in mercy and love and to endure injustice himself rather than inflict absolute justice on those who are blind and deaf children. In the midst of this mercy though, is a cry for change, for a change in perspective, a change in what is hoped for, what is sought in this life, and a change in focus from self to God. We are called upon by the message of the Gospel

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to have a transformed world-view, a world-view that removes us from the center and focuses on the reality that God is the center, now, in the past, and forever. When our heart truly can comprehend this our life, every aspect of it, will be transformed. We cannot help living differently. We cannot help growing into greater maturity.

As we move on to the question of Pilate in 15:9, I think once again the irony continues. In 1 Samuel 8:4-7, we have the account of the people of Israel asking Samuel to appoint a king over them. They asked for a king like the other nations. We are told in this account that this request displeased Samuel, and so Samuel prayed to God. Yahweh then tells Samuel to give them what they want. He tells Samuel in this request they are not rejecting Samuel, but they are rejecting Yahweh as king over Israel. In Mark's account they once again reject Yahweh as king, by rejecting Jesus. And as the irony continues they do not simply reject Jesus, they want him crucified. They curse him: In Deuteronomy 21:23 we have the text that tells us that "anyone hung on a tree is under God's curse." In Mark's account the people are crying out for God to be cursed, even if they fail to fully realize this. They curse God as they cry out for the crucifixion of

Jesus. In Mark's account of this incident he chooses to focus on the fact that Pilate questions the crowd three times (Verses 9, 12, 14).<sup>10</sup>

At verse 15, we see that the great might of men falls once again to the anarchy of the mass, as the crowd has cried out for blood and death; and Pilate, the representative of the greatest kingdom of the earth, an empire; acquiesces and takes the easy, the expedient route; rather than the route of justice. Surely here the words of Yeats speak to this situation in his poem entitled *The Second Coming*:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.

As we move on to verse 16, the irony simply drips from the text as the Roman soldiers clothe Jesus in a purple cloak, crown him with

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<sup>10</sup> R. Alan Culpepper, *Mark*, pp. 543-544.

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a crown of thorns, and they begin to salute him as king of the Jews. All three of these symbolic acts, which were meant to shame and mock Jesus will prove to be true. Jesus will be lifted up as royalty such as the world has never before seen, the Lion of the tribe of Judah will rule. He will be crowned, and surely the crown upon his head made of thorns ironically portrays the reason for his coronation. Jesus did not love his life more than those he sought to save and he trusted God in following the path of God rather than what seems reasonable, or expedient for his own well-being. In truth, this is a path of thorns and bloodshed. In the end Jesus will be declared king not by the Jews, but by Yahweh, creator of the universe, as he raises him from the dead.

Mark's account of the crucifixion, that begins in verse 21, is decidedly brief. The place of the crucifixion is at a place called Golgotha, which is an Aramaic name that has been translated as "the place of the/a skull." The traditional interpretation of this name has been that this refers to a hill outside Jerusalem that bore some resemblance to a skull. Other possibilities however, are available. According to Jewish legend, Adam's skull was buried at the place of

Jesus' execution while others speculate that it was called the place of the skull due to the fact that it was a place that had commonly been used for executions and there were skulls laying on the ground there. Stonings and executions were always done outside the city (Leviticus 24:14; Numbers 15:35-36; 1 Kings 21:13; John 19:20; Acts 7:58).<sup>11</sup>

We do not know which of these choices is correct and it is possible that all are correct, or that none are.

The description of the soldiers dividing the clothes of Jesus after casting lots for them at verse 24 echoes Psalm 22:18, which is the first of a series of allusions to Psalms. At verse 26, we come to another point of irony as the soldiers, intending to mock Jesus, actually prophesy the truth in the creation of their inscription (king of the Jews). Jesus was crucified between two bandits and though commentators try to make much out of the word here translated as "bandits" (ληστές) it likely simply means "bandits" here, in this time period.<sup>12</sup> The reference to the two bandits (criminals) crucified with Jesus was later associated with Isaiah 53:12, that speaks of Jesus being "numbered with the transgressors." If you notice in most

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<sup>11</sup> R. Alan Culpepper, *Mark*, pp. 544-548.

<sup>12</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, p. 647.

modern Bibles the text skips from verse 27 to 29, leaving out the gloss that was added as verse 28 in some older Bibles. This verse only entered the text in later manuscripts of Mark, a book that very seldom actually quotes an Old Testament passage directly.<sup>13</sup> As we continue in verse 29, we see once again Jesus being mocked, and once again this mocking from the opponents, or at least not the followers of Jesus, will come to be reality. An additional bit of irony is contained in verse 30 in the fact that if Jesus came down from the cross and saved himself as his mockers request their fate would be sealed, and their hope for the future would be gone. This mocking continues in the words of the chief priests and the scribes as the blindness and incomprehension for them continues. They do not comprehend that Jesus has come to show them the way to God and that way is not through selfishness in a sense of self-preservation, but comes through the sacrificing of self for others. In this Jesus demonstrates for us the true nature of God. The taunting continues and the scene is set for what follows with Jesus suffering alone, with everyone around him mocking him and being against him.

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<sup>13</sup> R. Alan Culpepper, *Mark*, p. 552.



It was not at all easy to preach the good news of a crucified savior to those who had witnessed a crucifixion. For them there would be the question of how there could be anything good about a crucifixion. For Jews, the view was that crucifixion defiled the land, and the people so killed were cursed by God himself. For the Gentiles, even the concept that a divine man, or the son of God, could be killed, much less crucified, was ludicrous (1 Corinthians 1:19). For Mark the proclamation of a crucified Messiah would have been made even more difficult during, or just after, a war between the Jews in Rome that ended in the destruction of the temple and a great many executions under Titus. What did the death and resurrection mean to the writer of this Gospel account? A close examination of Mark's Gospel shows that the shadow of the cross falls across the entire expanse of his account. Every part of the Gospel account points to the cross.<sup>14</sup>

Mark is fond of threes, and as such he gives three passion predictions (8:31; 9:31; 10:32-34), and the time of Jesus on the cross is measured in increments of three, he presents three groups of

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<sup>14</sup> R. Alan Culpepper, *Mark*, pp. 552-555.

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mockers in 15:29-32. The structure of Mark points to the third and final act, the phenomena that accompany the death of Jesus. The darkness (15:33), the cry of despair (15:34-37), the ripping of the temple veil (15:38), and finally to the centurions confession (15:38).

These events are the key to comprehending Mark's understanding of the death of Jesus. These four phenomena do not simply heighten the tension in the text, for Mark they interpret its meaning. As we begin let us begin with the sign of the darkness, what does it mean?


In the Old Testament darkening of the sun was a sign of judgment. As such it could express the displeasure of God toward other people (Exodus 10:15, 21-23; Ezekiel 30:18-19; 32:7-8). The judgment of God on Israel is also expressed by darkness upon the land (Amos 5:18, 20; Joel 2:2, 10, 31; 3:15; Jeremiah 15:6, 9; Isaiah 13:9-10; 50:2-3; Lamentations 3:1-2; Zephaniah 1:15). The closest parallel to our passage in Mark 15:33 is Amos 8:9: "And on that day, the Lord Yahweh says, 'The sun I will cause to go down at noon and I will darken the earth in the light of day.'" For Mark, the darkness is to be

seen as a cosmic, eschatological sign of the judgment of God upon Israel and perhaps particularly upon the rulers of Israel.<sup>15</sup>

As we move to verse 34 (“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”), we come to a verse that is troublesome and problematic for us. Most of the time this is the case not because of what is said here, but because of our preconceived notions, of what we think ought to be said here in what we see as Jesus moment of triumph. Especially if we hold the view that he died as a substitutionary sacrifice for our sins. Here in Mark’s Gospel, this saying has often been softened by stating our view that Jesus is here observing a Jewish tradition of quoting the first verses of a passage and then expecting the audience to know that he intended them to have the whole passage in mind. In this case, the later verses of Psalm 22 sound a more triumphal note that fits with what we want here. What we need to do, however, is to let Mark speak for himself and the reaction of those in his narrative gives us a clue as to how this passage is to be perceived. At least some of them misunderstood even what was said and thought he was calling out for help from

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<sup>15</sup> R. Alan Culpepper, *Mark*, pp. 555-557.



Elijah. Others seem to have seen it as simply a cry for help as they tried to help Jesus by giving him a drink.

As we examine the text here, it is important that we give due deference to what Mark is actually telling us and then we can work on trying to ascertain what it means for us. We must however, always seek to put aside our own prejudices and notions in order to be open to the message of the Gospel. So often, as we proclaim the Gospel, we change and alter it to fit what we believe and where the Gospel should call us to a changed lifestyle and perspective we often instead transform the Gospel message to fit us, rather than allowing the Gospel to transform us to fit it. Here, just as in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus cries out in agony and loneliness, and yet here, just as in the garden he does not allow his feelings of despair and loneliness to turn him from his path. Jesus is obedient to God and fulfills what he began. By refusing to save himself he will save others.<sup>16</sup> Jesus once again reiterates the message of the Gospel and that is, that a life of self-sacrifice and care for others is the path that

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<sup>16</sup> Mark L. Strauss, *Mark*, in the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament series, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 2014), pp. 702-703.

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God chooses for his image-bearer and Jesus blazes the trail for those who would be his disciples and follow him.

At verse 37, we have Jesus giving out a loud cry and then he breathed his last. At that moment, we are told that the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. God has vindicated the judgment of Jesus upon the temple at that moment. Just as Judaism had excluded the Gentiles from full-participation, now in the church, the nations would come to him through the preaching of the Gospel message. At verse 39, then we have a last bit of irony perhaps as we have the Centurion, because of what he has witnessed, recognizing the uniqueness of Jesus and his death (even if one takes the Centurion's words as intending irony). Those that were blind were still blind, those that were deaf were still deaf, but at least a glimpse of light seems to have come. Note also in verses 40-41, it is not the men but the woman who are mentioned. The women, and what appears to be a stranger (Joseph of Arimathea) would finish out this chapter, narrating the death and burial of Jesus.

The words of the Old Testament are seen as powerful witness to the fact that the life and death of Jesus are not ordinary. They are

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the proclamation of God for his plan to redeem his people and return them to him. Mark sees these ancient words as crucial in his telling of the Gospel. They are more than oracles and predictions they are words that become reality in the same way that God called light out of darkness in the days of creation his words, spoken through the prophets, have now become reality in Jesus Christ. The Gospel of Mark calls us to recognize Jesus as his Messiah, as the one leading the way, the one calling for his followers to live life in a different manner, a manner that reflects the removal of blindness and deafness. Jesus calls for his disciples to live life in service to God, a life that will entail having their blood spilled as a testimony to the nature of God who gives himself to his creation. We as his image bearers are called to live our lives as a reflection of the nature of God.

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# Synopsis

As we come to the passion of Christ we come to a part of the Gospel of Mark that is permeated through and through with citations and allusions to Scripture. Mark seldom makes it clear that this is what he is doing, but rather there seems to be the expectation that his audience will be so immersed in the Old Testament that they will make the connections. Mark, in these last three chapters (14-16) will relate to other parts of Scripture besides Isaiah, such as Daniel 7, Zechariah 9-14 and the Psalms of the Righteous Sufferer. The Servant Songs of Isaiah, especially Isaiah 53, are especially important for Mark in chapter 15.


Mark uses irony powerfully and frequently here and as the scene of chapter 15 opens we find the Jews, handing Jesus over to Pontius Pilate. In an ironical twist they seek to ally themselves with their arch enemy in order to kill God. In spite of the might of Israel and the all powerful Roman empire we see events continuing to unfold according to the design of God, through a man dying on a cross. Jesus fulfills Scripture after Scripture, and for those that are

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not deaf and blind the ancient prophecies are fulfilled in what appears to be the weakest moment in the ministry of Jesus, which by the way, is actually a moment of his greatest triumph. Even in this moment Jesus “amazes” Pilate even in his silence.

We see in this section, Mark masterfully tell the story of how God takes what the world considers weakness and defeat and turns it into true strength and true victory. Even the horrific act of crucifixion is transformed from a moment of shame and cursing into a moment of exaltation and blessing. The death of Jesus is not unique because it is about a man dying, but because it is about God dying, rather than destroying. In gentleness and submission he reaches out to God’s children and dies rather than destroys. In despair and forsakenness Jesus continues to trust and obey having a vision for what can be, and what is, rather than what appears to be. We know that Jesus is God’s Messiah because he continually fulfills the words of the ancient prophecies even as he dies. The hand of the divine is seen in the life, and even in the death of Jesus. Israel once again rejects God as king and in their passionate conviction they drown their innocence. In this chapter we see the way opened up for





Gentiles to come and be blessed as we have the Temple veil ripped from top to bottom and surely it is profound that the Centurion seems to recognize that there is something unique in the death of this man over the death of others he has seen. For the readers of this Gospel, challenges are made to see life, death, and God in a different light. We are called upon to see that God would rather die than harm, he would rather be cursed than curse and he seeks relationship continually among those who reject his rule. He seeks sight where there was blindness and he seeks hearing where there was deafness. He seeks restored relationship where it has been shattered and forsaken.

# Questions

1. What role do you think suffering plays in the life of human beings? Why?
2. Why do you think it matters if Jesus fulfills ancient prophecies?
3. Why is the Old Testament important for us today?
4. Why do people reject having a king over them?
5. What are some things that you can be really passionate about? Why?
6. What are some things that make you apathetic? Why?
7. Why would a good person want to kill another person?
8. What would you be willing to suffer for your children? Why?
9. Do you think God sees us as His Children? Why, or why not?
10. What makes the death of Jesus unique?
11. How might blindness and deafness relate to immaturity?
12. Why is the obedience of Jesus to the path God has set for him important?

13. How does the message that the Son of God died challenge your view of God? Why?
14. How does mercy triumph over justice on the cross?
15. What message do you think God is sending us by allowing Jesus to die?
16. What difference does that message make to you and the way you live your life? Why?
17. What traits would you value in a king? Why?
18. Why do you think people seem to be more passionate when they are doing evil than when they are doing good?
19. How is a man dying on a cross a victory for us, and for God?
20. What lesson should we learn about how we should live our life from the way that Jesus lived his, and surrendered his life?
21. What does the cross teach us about the nature of God?
22. How has the cross of Jesus changed your life?